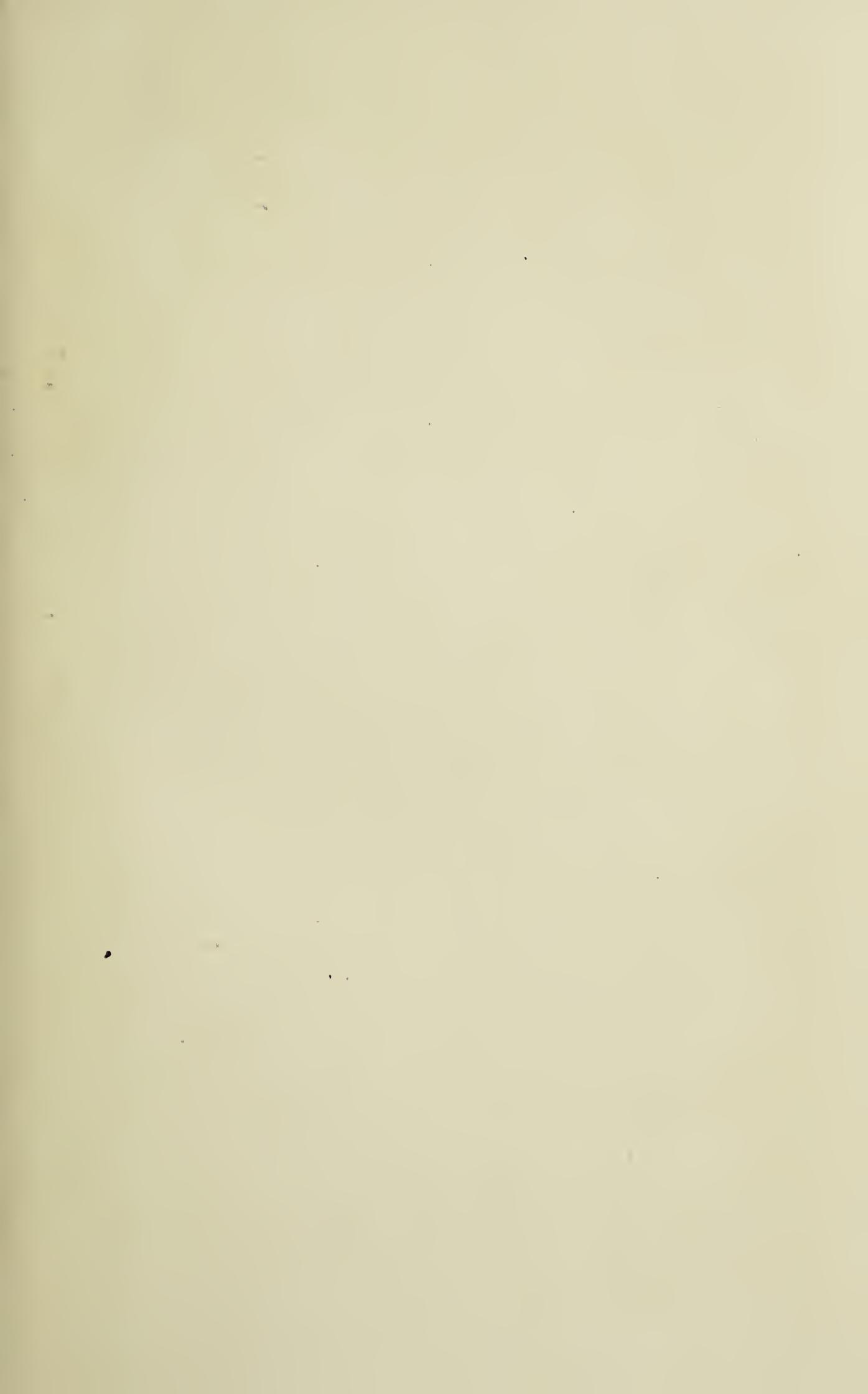




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The Christian credentials





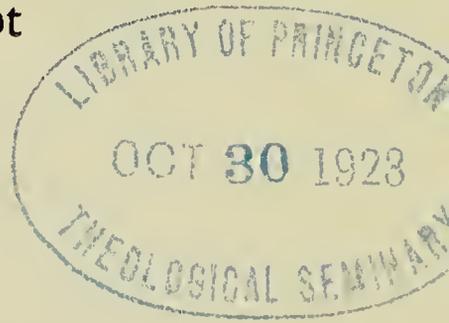
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The Christian Credentials

An Appeal of Faith to Doubt

The Christian Credentials

An Appeal of Faith to Doubt



✓ By

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WITH INTRODUCTION BY
S. PARKES CADMAN, D.D.



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Introduction

I AM thankful that Dr. Lawrence has consented to the publication of this timely and helpful book. As an Apologetic for the Gospel of the New Testament it comes into a somewhat crowded field. Nevertheless, it has merits of its own, which make it a valuable work to circulate among ministers and laymen alike, to say nothing of the millions of nominal believers or of avowed aliens to Christianity, who do not clearly understand the essentials of our religion.

The author approaches his theme in a manner that Bishop Butler would have commended, but with a certitude which the great philosopher's probabilism did not have. He first shows us those inherent necessities of human life and thought which demand reasonable satisfaction, and then he proceeds to find their satisfaction in the Person, the Teaching and the Mission of our Blessed Lord.

The truth that personality, human and divine, is the sole gateway of religious com-

munications is made the basis of a weighty discussion favouring the Christo-centric position in theological determinations. Dr. Lawrence also happily combines the historical and experimental elements of these vital issues. What has actually happened and what has been firmly believed in Christian annals are skillfully blended and made complementary to each other. Throughout the book there is a frank acknowledgment of the burdens resting upon faith. The author is not diverted from his real task by dogmatic assertions that the march to Paradise is nearly ended. He does not inflict upon his readers the insolence of ill-founded hopes, nor kindle false expectations, the extinction of which frequently eventuates in disaster or even in despair. But while admitting the difficulties of belief he stresses the infinitely greater difficulties of unbelief. The result is beneficial. It bids us hearken to the voice of Faith and ignore the voice of Fear.

Dr. Lawrence's plea for a renewed church consciousness in Protestantism stands out like a lamp in a dark place. It should be heard and heeded by the clergy of the Reformed Churches. For the organic weakness of Protestantism is largely traceable to its inability

to conceive of Christianity in universal terms. This book demonstrates that such an inability is not congenital and that it can and should be eliminated by a progressive reintegration of the religious forces of the Protestant order.

The author's quotations and references indicate the width and discrimination of his reading. One finds in them a grateful stirring of recollections belonging to true theological culture, and to men whose names are synonyms for profound devotion and sound learning. The prevalence throughout the volume of the author's strong and vigorous individuality will not surprise those who have been fortunate enough to know him and the evangelical range, force and persuasiveness of his ministry. I am fully aware of the insufficiency of these prefatory remarks, but if they induce the reader to make close contact with this book, my end will have been gained.

S. PARKES CADMAN.

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I

THE PRESENT SITUATION

CHRISTIANITY presents a series of great and commanding affirmations. It is far more than an array of guesses and peradventures. It deals with the foundations of experience and with the ultimates of thought. It asserts the personality of God, and reveals Him as the First Cause of all that is. It makes a disclosure of Deity in the person of the One who founded the Faith, and whose abiding energy is the secret of its progress through the Christian ages. It presents God as the Father of the human race, and in so doing lifts the doctrine of human brotherhood to a spiritual level from which it can never be dislodged as long as the truth of Divine Fatherhood is held. It deals with man as an immortal being for whom death can have only an incidental significance. It states the doctrine of the Kingdom of God on earth in terms which preclude all uncertainty. It portrays the moral evil of the world in lurid

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colours, yet with the fullest confidence that such evils may be overcome, and mankind uplifted to heights of holiness where life is crowned with beauty and joy.

*The sons of wretchedness and night,
May dwell in the Eternal Light
Through the Eternal Love.*

These and kindred affirmations carry with them a body of claims which are unique. The Christian Faith is not presented to us merely as an explanation of a number of puzzles, or as an answer to the many questions which man feels he may legitimately ask. It is not a philosophy to be discussed, but rather a demand for conformity to a series of ideals. "Be ye transformed" (Paul). Its appeals are ethical, and go to the roots of our being. It summons men to repentance of all known sin, and to the immediate acceptance of all clearly-revealed duty. It says something about the quest for happiness, but much more concerning the pursuit of holiness. It calls upon men to walk upon the high and difficult pathways of sacrifice. It presents the will of a holy God as the supreme motive of life. At its behest all self-seeking tempers and aims are to be brought into

submission to spiritual authority. The issues which it raises are vital. As Dr. Newman Smyth truly says, "Jesus speaks in imperatives. He does not argue with men; He commands them. Like the successive strokes of a bell ringing out over the hills and down the valleys, these imperatives of Jesus sound forth across the ages: Repent; Believe; Come; Follow me; Take up your cross; Seek first the Kingdom of God; Keep my commandments."¹ These demands of faith may be accepted or rejected, but they permit of no paltering. All attempts to make the Christian Faith more agreeable to the delicate tastes of this age by the elimination of dogma are futile. Indeed there are some clear Christian thinkers who suggest that a genuine revival of dogma must precede the next great revival of religion. In any case we gain nothing by whittling down the demands of faith to so many vanishing points.

In the Nature of Things these demands call for an answer. The replies to Faith should be as definite as its challenges. To patronize the Christian Religion by pious appreciations of its integrities and beauties; to concede to it the

¹ "The Reality of Faith," p. 100.

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position of primacy among the religions of the world; to bestow upon it a gracious personal approval; to do this and nothing more, marks an obvious failure to realize its authority. This kind of behaviour, by no means uncommon, met its fitting appraisal in the judgment of Jesus: "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"² Until a man has answered the Christian demands in terms of personal obedience, he has either not answered at all, or his answer is an evasion.

What is the modern answer to the Christian challenge?

Thirty years ago, that keen observer of American life, Dr. Josiah Strong, wrote these words: "If the many towns and cities which have been investigated in various states are fairly representative of the whole country, we may infer that less than thirty per cent. are regular attendants upon church, that perhaps twenty per cent. are irregular attendants, while fully one-half of the people of the United States never attend any church service."³ Since those words were written America has increased its population by more than fifty per

² Luke 6:46.

³ "The New Era," Josiah Strong, D. D., p. 205.

cent., but it is doubtful if the ratio of church membership to the rest of the community has been greatly changed. For the purpose of this argument an exact statistical statement is not essential; an approximate judgment is adequate. The situation may be thus stated—nearly one-half of the people of the United States are never seen in any place of Christian worship. They make no affirmative response to the Christian demand. Only in relatively small numbers are they avowed atheists, and in many cases they take an honourable place among our law-abiding citizens. In some instances they manifest virtues and graces of the Christian type. They have not entirely forfeited their Christian heritages and habits. Contact with religious traditions and associations has left its imprint upon them. But they have made no personal avowals of the Christian Faith. They stand apart from the distinctive Christian campaign. They may not be intentional enemies of the Cross, but they are not its adherents.

In thus stating the case I am not trying to invest church membership with the guarantees of Christian salvation, nor to endow it with an unwarranted measure of spiritual sanctity. It

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is certain, however, that the Christian Church does furnish an approximate registration of Christian belief and life. Every great revival of the Christian religion has been followed by a renewed devotion to church life and fellowship. Its services, its sacraments and its activities have received a new significance. The dogma "no salvation outside the Church" is not invoked in this discussion. I simply assert the position maintained by theologians and Christian leaders, and shared by the general consensus of religious opinion, that the acceptance of the Christian Faith finds its normal and consistent expression in personal attachment to the Church. If no one accepted the Faith, the Church would soon cease to exist; if all accepted it, the membership of the Church would speedily register the fact.

In this general sense, therefore, the ratio of church membership to the population tells its own story concerning the attitude of half of the people toward the Christian Faith. That attitude is one of non-acceptance. Is non-acceptance the equivalent of rejection? I think not, although it is not always easy to differentiate. In some instances non-acceptance may be regarded as a temporary phase rather than

a final attitude of mind and will. A man may be urged to invest a sum of money in some promising, though speculative enterprise. He fails to take positive action, although giving serious thought to the proposal. He is not convinced of the safety of the enterprise, neither is he indifferent to its possibilities. He is non-committal. Obviously, however, this is a mental attitude which cannot be maintained indefinitely. Sooner or later he must reach a decision. He will be swayed by the risks of the venture more than by its prospects and will reject the offer, or he will be influenced more by its prospects than by its risks and will accept it. In both the financial and religious spheres non-acceptance is simply a suspense of judgment, but it is obvious that in neither sphere can the judgment be held in permanent suspense. In all practical matters, including religion, a man inevitably moves on toward acceptance or rejection.

Making all due allowance for those who have not reached a definite conclusion, it is evident that great masses of our American people have answered the Christian appeal in terms of rejection. Their attitude is one of unbelief. The conditions throughout the English-speak-

ing world, the field in which we are most directly interested, do not greatly differ from those in our own land.

There are able religious thinkers and observers who, noting the large measure of popular disregard to religious appeals, seek to cover the situation by the use of another word, viz., *indifference*. I am convinced that this term is inadequate, and that its usage has been strained. *Why are men indifferent?* What is the explanation of indifference? If this inquiry be carefully followed, I believe it will be found that indifference is itself an expression of unbelief. Under normal thought-processes a man is indifferent to matters which have no particular value or interest for him. The Christian religion cannot be so interpreted. Its affirmations deal with the motives, purposes, standing and destinies of men. It is a life and death matter, or it is nothing. Its imperious demands and its exalted ideals can only be consistently set aside by disproof of its basal premises, or failure to feel their reality. If Jesus was what He claimed to be His demands cannot be other than what they are. A rational thought-process cannot admit the historic bases of the Christian Faith and yet reject its

demands upon conduct and life. If those demands are rejected, it is evident that the basal affirmations are not seriously believed. An invalid is not indifferent to a medicine which he believes will cure him, especially if it is the only remedy within sight. The prisoner in the cell is not indifferent to an act of executive clemency. A thirsty man is not careless of the contents of the glass if he has every reason to believe they have been drugged. The healthy-minded man is never indifferent to anything which is admittedly of vital moment to his best interests. Whole-hearted belief is fatal to indifference. The wide-spread disregard of the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion is incompatible with belief in the Divine factors of Faith, but is easily explained where those factors are not sincerely believed.

American psychology in the World War furnishes a fair illustration of this contention. Many intelligent Americans were largely indifferent to the war in its earlier stages. They did not trouble to do more than read the newspaper headlines, and in some instances they did not show even that modicum of interest. They discouraged "war-talk," and were almost disposed to pronounce any earnest reference to the

great tragedy as a violation of good taste. They were indifferent, and frankly admitted it. Why? Because there were certain basal facts concerning the war which they did not believe. They were unconcerned because they were unbelieving. The reality and almost incredible magnitude of the Pan-Germanic dream; the passion with which the military party in Germany dedicated itself to the thought of supreme world-power; the larger meanings and horrors of frightfulness; the inclusion of America within the scope of German intrigue; all these and similar facts, which determined the origin and progress of the war, were not seriously believed by many in our midst. Once they were accepted, and in some measure visualized, the reactions of these people were suddenly and radically changed.

Popular indifference to religion admits of a similar explanation. The basic facts of the Christian Faith are not clearly seen. The arguments of Faith are not grasped. Masses of people are not avowed atheists, yet even with them unbelief may be the dominating factor of life, so far as its religious interests are concerned. A man may not be an atheist, but he is an unbeliever when he fails to recognize

the Christian view of truth. Undoubtedly this was one of the reasons why Jesus laid such repeated emphasis on belief. The word was constantly upon His lips. He seemed always to assume that a man's belief was the regulating factor of his conduct. Dr. John Watson writes, "He marvelled twice; once at men's unbelief, once at a Roman centurion's faith."⁴ The reason assigned for the production of the Fourth Gospel by its writer is suggestive; "These (things) are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."⁵ The other evangelists might have used the same words. The whole purpose of the Christian Gospel is the presentation of a series of facts for human belief. Until such belief is established, there can be no adequate spiritual reaction in favour of Faith. Belief in the historic verities of the Christian religion opens the way for the acceptance of its duties and demands. Nothing else can. The psychology of the New Testament is beyond question. Belief precedes action. Christian experience follows in the track of Chris-

⁴ "The Mind of the Master," p. 135.

⁵ John 20: 31.

tian conviction. To say that Christian Theology has grown out of experience is, at best, only a partial truth. I believe we are much nearer the truth when we say that Christian experience has grown out of the acceptance of the Christian revelation. It may be objected, *e. g.*, that the prayer of a child antedates any clear belief in the doctrine of prayer. But does not a child pray because it has been taught and trained by some other person who does believe in the doctrine of prayer? Indifference is a clear indication of the absence of vital belief. Where the fundamental truths of religion are not sensed they cannot be operative. It is just this failure to *sense* Christian truth that creates the general condition which we describe as *indifference*. A man only really believes that which impinges in some way upon his consciousness; everything else is largely unreal to him.

This failure to grasp the arguments and challenges of Faith has been encouraged during recent years by several movements closely associated with religion itself.

The general public has received the impression that there is a wide and almost fathomless chasm between Science and Faith. It has

heard much of the quarrel between these two camps, and much that it has heard has been exaggeration. Its misgivings have been still further increased by the excitement caused by the pronouncements of Biblical criticism. In many cases people have only the vaguest idea as to the meaning of the term. They have unfortunately gathered the impression that the studies of Biblical scholars have in some way invalidated the spiritual authority of the Bible. For the growth of this unfortunate impression the extremists of the conservative school of Biblical teachers must bear some measure of responsibility. More than once I have heard a stalwart conservative say in effect, "Either the Bible is an infallible book—or it is not. If it is *not* infallible, it is worthless. If there are any verbal errors in the book, it is not infallible, and therefore worthless." Along comes a Dr. Robertson Smith, or a Canon Driver, or a Professor Peake who says, "There are lots of verbal errors." The ill-informed man, who knows very little of the Bible, but who has overheard this discussion, is immediately encouraged in his non-committal attitude. Almost unconsciously he drifts toward a position of uncertainty. In effect he says, "After

all, who knows? There is disagreement between Science and Faith; there is conflict between liberal and conservative expositors of the Bible. At any rate, is there not an element of uncertainty hanging like a veil over the whole subject?" Conservative extremists have staked all upon an unsafe premise. They have piously gambled,—and lost. No one doubts their sincerity, but there are times when sincerity may be a fanaticism. A skillful and unscrupulous scepticism has been quick to take advantage of this situation.

The case is well stated by Professor Peake. "There is an energetic and skillfully conducted propaganda of unbelief," he says, "promoted by men who acknowledge no God, no free-will, no sin, no redemption, who cast doubt on the very existence of Jesus, and are determined to leave no stone unturned that they may extirpate a belief in the religion of which He is the foundation. . . . In the general unsettlement which is so characteristic of our time it is not wonderful if many feel that the whole religious territory has been converted into a quivering morass."⁶ "The general unsettlement!" There the great English scholar lays

⁶ "The Bible," A. S. Peake, D. D., p. 3.

his hand upon the most characteristic feature of our age. "*Unsettlement.*" It is significant that just at the time when Dr. Peake was writing these words, one of our leading American preachers, Dr. Jefferson, wrote these lines at the beginning of his book, "Things Fundamental": "Mental confusion is everywhere. It is impossible that the Christian Church should escape it. The impression has gone abroad that Christianity is not what it used to be; that the Bible is not the book it was when we were young; that the old doctrines have been, if not discredited, at least seriously modified; that Jesus of Nazareth must be looked at from a different viewpoint; and that the Christian Church is not worthy of the veneration which was given to it by the fathers."¹ Unsettlement! Mental confusion! A thousand authorities could be found to endorse the views of these two able men. This is the atmosphere in which indifference is most likely to thrive, especially when the age is marked by such material activities as the world has never known. There are over ten millions of automobiles rushing to and fro through our land. Airplanes move across the sky. The radio-

¹ "Things Fundamental," Chas. E. Jefferson, D. D., p. 2.

graph fascinates by its wizardry. These things make an almost unlimited demand upon the thought, the imagination and the interest of the people. A man has only so much mental energy, as he has only so much time, and when these material wonders absorb his personal interest, it is obvious that spiritual questions receive little attention. They do not "impinge" upon his consciousness. Materialism may be dead as a philosophy, but it is alive and vigorous as a passion and a habit.

*The world is too much with us, late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.*

One wonders what the Wordsworth of the quiet hills and vales of the English Lake district would say now, if he spent a few days in one of our rushing, roaring American cities! Unless belief in the Christian verities be clearly defined and deeply rooted, it is apt to be dislodged by the severe pressure of material things.

Christian leadership will make a serious mistake if it assumes that the masses of the people are fairly familiar with Christian evidences. They are not. Those evidences need to be stated, illumined, enforced and repeated all

over the land, by sermon, lecture, pamphlet and volume. It is possible that this might prove to be the greatest social service the Church could render to the nation.

There are valid credentials for the Christian Faith against which neither science, philosophy nor criticism can present counter-arguments. We have a wealth of offensive and defensive weapons in the armoury of Faith. Christianity need not ask to be taken on intellectual sufferance. There may be difficulties in the way of believing; it is well to remind men that there are greater difficulties in the way of *not* believing, if they will but think clearly. Scholarly hair-splittings are not necessary in order to gain the adherence of the average man. And it is to the average man, thoughtful, practical, and more or less open-minded that I present several phases of truth which, without pretension, may be advanced as *Credentials of the Christian Faith*.

II

INHERENT PROBABILITY

WHEN the government of the United States sends an ambassador to another nation, it *accredits* him. It places certain official documents in his hands, and these he presents upon his arrival in London, Paris or Berlin. A foreign government has the right to demand these credentials, and the ambassador would be unreasonable were he to resent such a demand. How can another government be sure that the ambassador is the official he claims to be if the credentials are not forthcoming? Other American citizens might pose as such, and serious international complications might ensue. When his credentials are presented and verified the way is open for him to act with authority on all matters pertaining to his office. The matter of the credentials is the first to be settled.

As I have already observed, the Christian religion announces a series of commanding affirmations. These utterances are not the re-

sultants of human observation, reasoning, or even experience. They claim to be Divine disclosures. Christianity does not portray man's slow and painful ascent toward God, so much as God's gracious descent to man. It is an incoming of the Divine into human life and relations. It claims the place of supreme authority. It brooks no rival. It asks for confidence, service and sacrifice. It summons to personal surrender.

It is difficult to imagine how any demands could be more imperious or unwavering. In the nature of the case Christianity ought to be able to present evidences of its own good faith. The medical man must be able, on demand, to show his professional diploma. So must the lawyer. The delicate and valuable interests with which they deal ought to be safeguarded from the charlatan and the pretender. If the Christian religion claims Divine authority for dealing with the vital interests of conscience, character and destiny, it is only fair to expect it to furnish reasonable evidence as a warrant for such claim. Man finds himself endowed with reason and judgment. These are the faculties which he employs in dealing with all the important affairs of life. If man is to

respond to religion, he can only do so with the powers he has. Reason has its place even in spiritual affairs. Jesus appealed to reason. "What think ye of Christ?" Reason may not be able to furnish the final appraisal of the disclosures of religion; but reason *is* able to judge its credentials. Christianity when worthily interpreted has never claimed blind and unreasoning assent. It is prepared to state its case intelligently. The New Testament urges Christians to be familiar with the *grounds* of their faith, and to be able to state them. There is nothing unspiritual about an argument, notwithstanding the maudlin piety with which some Christian weaklings would push it aside. We are commanded to love God with the mind as well as the heart. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." One cannot fail to be impressed with the fairness of this New Testament injunction. Peter assumes that there *is* a reason, and that Christianity is vastly more than a thoughtless and irrational sentiment. Aspiration, desire, love, are gracious and redeeming sentiments, but they need to be woven around the framework of reasoned conviction, just as nature weaves

the garment of flesh around the skeleton. The first truth which I shall present as a credential of the Faith is that of INHERENT PROBABILITY.

Every one knows, in a general way, something of the large place held by probability in the actual workings of human experience. The decisions we make, the enterprises we undertake, the plans we formulate, even the friendships we cherish, are largely decided by this principle. In few matters are we able to claim absolute certainty. Bishop Butler did not state the case too strongly when he wrote, "Probability is the guide of life."

Does the Christian revelation harmonize with the inherent probabilities of the case? Is there, in the Nature of Things, any valid argument *against* a Divine revelation? If such an argument can be found, it makes the task of Faith in establishing its claims all the more difficult. To revert to my former illustration—if it were found that the man claiming to be the American Ambassador were unable to speak a word of the language of his nation, his official claims would be immediately marked by inherent improbability. The officials of a European government would naturally argue that it would be unlikely that

the American government would commission a man to act as its ambassador if he were unable to speak its language. Does the principle of probability favour or discredit the idea of a Divine revelation?

That lucid thinker and teacher, Dr. Joseph Cook, constantly used a phrase which it is hard to improve, and for which it is difficult to find a substitute, viz., "The Nature of Things." "The Nature of Things is above and around and beneath us." Laying aside all preferences and prejudices, all likes and dislikes, let us frankly answer this question, Is a Christian revelation likely or unlikely in the *Nature of Things*? Either we live in a rational universe, or we do not! Let us assume for the time being that the nature of things is penetrated and governed by reason. In that case there is surely some relation between human needs and the resources of the universe. Things are set in juxtaposition. Hunger implies food. Thirst implies water. The capacity for love is prophetic of the object of love.

Does man *need* a Divine revelation? Surely the most pronounced unbeliever will concede an affirmative answer. Take the fact of moral

evil. It is a fact which all honest thinkers admit and deplore. The civilizations of Greece and Rome were marked by brilliant achievements. It may be questioned whether the creations of Greek art have ever been surpassed through the succeeding ages. Rome produced statesmen, orators, thinkers, poets, who for sheer mental ability might easily challenge comparison with the greatest men now living. Yet, on the day that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, more than half of the men, women, and children living in the city of Rome were slaves. A Roman emperor could issue a command directing that the living body of one of his slaves should be chopped up as food for pet fishes,—and obedience to such a command was marked by little or no comment. One writer has said, “At the beginning of the Christian era Roman society was one mighty ulcer before God.” Even those who question the theology of St. Paul may be willing to admit his standing as a historian, and the picture which he draws of the heathen world in his first chapter of Romans is enough to cause a shock of horror to any healthy conscience. He is obviously sketching a civilization which sought to reduce sin to a science. Few mod-

ern writers had a greater admiration for Greek and Roman life than had Matthew Arnold, but loyalty to truth compelled him to write the oft-quoted lines:

*On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell;
Deep-seated weariness and lust
Made human life a hell.*

The pre-Christian religions seem to have been helpless before the volume and energy of the moral evil resident in human nature. This may be explained to some extent by the fact that, in those systems, there was no vital relation between religion and morality. It is no lack of charity which compels us to say that Hindu, Greek, and Roman religions never aimed to make men ethically good. It is not that they tried and failed; they never tried. Dr. Fairbairn writes, "In Greece, religion was a matter of oracles and shrines, of festivals national and civil, of conformity to law and custom. The Roman worship consisted pre-eminently in expressions of joy, in lays and songs, in games and dances, and, above all, in banquets."¹ In a passage full of significance

¹ "The Philosophy of the Christian Religion," A. M. Fairbairn, D. D., p. 549.

Dr. Carnegie Simpson says, "That a religion should concern itself with character is to us a matter of course; but this was far from being the case in the great world into which the young Christian Gospel made its way. In the civilization of the Roman Empire—a civilization, in some respects, more elaborate than ours—religion was something absolutely apart from morality. The priests and augurs of ancient Greece and Rome never for one moment regarded it as part of their duty to exhort or help men to a purer life. Alike public life and private were steeped in a heartlessness of cruelty and an abandonment to vice such as we can hardly realize; but pagan religion made no protest, for, on the contrary, its mysteries often screened and its ministers sanctioned the grossest iniquities."²

In the light of these facts, is it not obvious that the world needed some revelation from God which should be marked by redeeming grace and power?

Consider the instinct for immortality. Man has such an instinct. It is found in all lands and in all ages.

² "The Fact of Christ," P. Carnegie Simpson, M. A., pp. 67, 68.

*Those that in barbarian burials killed the slave
and slew the wife,
Felt within themselves the sacred passions of the
second life.*

*Indian warriors dream of ampler hunting
grounds beyond the night,
E'en the black Australian, dying, hopes he shall
return a white.*

Scepticism has done its best to construe the instinct of immortality as a priestly creation, imposed upon mankind in order to be exploited for selfish ends. The belief in immortality is far too deep, too general, and too persistent to admit of any such explanation. Herbert Spencer worked very hard to explain it in a way compatible with his own philosophy. He suggested an origin based on shadows and dreams; primitive man looked in a pool of water and saw the reflection of his own face, or he noted the accompaniment of his own shadow, or he dreamed of his own dead friend and regarded the face in the dream as a proof of his friend's existence after death. This is altogether too childish for serious discussion, and it is doubtful if Spencer's most ardent followers are satisfied with any such an explanation. That a human instinct found over the whole habitable world, through all historic

ages, and when communication between distant lands was impossible, can be accounted for by a freak of thought on the part of this or that solitary savage, amounts to an impossibility. Yet the instinct is an abiding fact. J. Freeman Clark writes, "This (the belief in immortality) is found in all parts of the world, in all times, among all classes, however widely separated from each other by physical and moral barriers. The lowest tribes of savages unite with the most sublime philosophers in this conviction. On this point the Hottentot and the Fiji Islander agree with Plato and Aristotle."³

The Christian Faith is a verification of this instinct. It comes to man with the joyous assurance that in this matter he has not been deluded by some foolish dream or fantasy. It ratifies his title-deeds to a priceless inheritance. It is a reply from above to the calls and cries from the soul within. An unbiased mind is almost compelled to admit that, assuming the Nature of Things to be controlled by Reason, it is inherently probable that the universal longing for immortality should meet some Divine

³ "Ten Great Religions," J. Freeman Clark, Vol. II, p. 162.

assurance. The instinct of immortality is a world-wide, age-long and pathetic call to the Infinite; is it not inherently probable that the Infinite, if rational, will answer the call? To admit this is to assert the inherent probability of the Christian Faith.

Consider also the problem of social and world-wide relationships.

The sense of moral evil and the belief in immortality are, to a great extent, individual experiences. A man may repudiate any concern for the one and any interest in the other. But he cannot deny his place in a vast and ever-enlarging series of human relations. As Dr. R. F. Horton truly says, "It is quite impossible that a human life should verify itself or become valid in isolation: only as part of a social organism can the individual really live."⁴ As time goes on the world seems to become smaller, "and the race is more and more." We live more closely together. Society becomes increasingly complex, and its network of interests more delicate, and more susceptible of disturbance. Detachment is more and more difficult. Opportunities for trouble multiply through ever-increasing points of contact. Society is

⁴ "Great Issues," R. F. Horton, D. D., p. 335.

split up into classes, groups, blocs and interests, each disposed to promote its own ends by conflict. With the advancement of culture come new dangers to the body politic. Science thrusts its hand into the unseen and brings forth a blessing; it thrusts its hand again into the unseen, and brings forth a curse. Chemistry, for example, is to-day dealing with explosives, gases and microbes of such a deadly nature that the destruction of whole civilian communities in some future war is by no means impossible. A man may deny all interest in a future life, but he has no right to repudiate interest in "the life that *now* is." Surely no sane thinker can deny the proposition that man needs some clear light to shine upon the world's path, a voice to direct him, and a motive, or set of motives, higher and better than personal or group self-interest, if a worthy future is to be assured for the race. From out the perils and pitfalls of the course which the human family must take issues the piercing cry, "Who will show us any good?" In a rational system of things is it not inherently probable that some adequate answer will be forthcoming? And if the Christian apologist can show that the religion of Jesus *is* adequate, has not

that religion the right to present to every fair-minded man the credential of inherent probability?

Revelation is rational. Its principle comports with the worthiest forms of human experience. A monarch must give some kind of revelation to his subjects, or how can he expect loyalty? A government must announce some idea of its policies and objectives, or how can it command the confidence of its citizens? A father who would refuse to disclose himself to his own children would be adjudged unnatural and inhuman. If we assume that God *is*, and that He sustains any kind of personal relationship to men, revelation becomes both rational and probable. "It is undeniable that in every age and in every region men have longed for and believed in an external expression of the Divine mind."⁵ Surely that which claims to be a response to a universal craving of mankind must be pronounced inherently probable, if its contents are admittedly worthy.

I admit that this whole argument is based upon two assumptions,—the reality of God, and the consequent rationality of the Nature of

⁵ "Christian Theology," Dr. W. B. Pope, Vol. I, P. 52.

Things. These assumptions will be challenged. It is not likely that such a challenge will take the form of blank denial. Atheism, as a theory, is impossible of proof. A negation of God is obviously incapable of verification. The atheist would be compelled to travel to the remotest bounds of space, and to ransack the ever-receding eternities which not even thought can pursue, before he would be able to bring back to our earth the story of a universal blank. Scepticism may pass adverse judgment both upon the credentials and contents of Faith; it can never disprove the underlying assumption of Faith,—The Reality of God.

It cannot disprove, but it can refuse assent. That is its present status. It proclaims the inability of man to deal with the subject. It is purely agnostic. Herbert Spencer is probably the recognized leader of the agnostic position, and the substance of his opinions may be found in a single sentence: "The Power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable."⁶ Does not this strategic statement involve an element of self-contradiction? In the first place Spencer frankly admits that there *is* a Power. He even spells the word with a capital

⁶"First Principles," Herbert Spencer, p. 46.

letter. Why P instead of p? This is more than a slip of the pen. There *is* a Power. Spencer says so. And he also freely admits that this power "*manifests*" itself, and it manifests itself *to us*, that is, to our faculties. If there is an actual Power that manifests itself to our faculties, how can that Power be "utterly inscrutable"? I am not indulging in verbal hair-splitting when I express the judgment that the ideas denoted by these two terms "manifests" and "inscrutable" are contradictory. A manifestation is a manifestation or disclosure of something,—kindness or cruelty, wisdom or foolishness, beauty or deformity, love or hate. It is as though Spencer had said, "I admit that there is an organist at the keyboard of the instrument because of the *manifestation* of his presence, but I deny that we can know anything about him, either as a person or a player." If I cannot know anything about him, how do I know he is there? Either Spencer admits too much or denies too much for consistent thinking.

It is not a difficult matter for modern unbelief to assume its attitude of dissent. It is strange, however, that in so many instances it fails to see the unworthiness of its own posi-

tion. The world cannot live on negatives. Not in any offensive spirit would we remind unbelief of Carlyle's statement, "The Devil is an everlasting no." Unbelief must present a statement of the Nature of Things more convincing to the intellect, more imperative to the conscience, more assuring to the heart, than the Christian statement, before it can claim the respect of independent thinkers.

Some time ago a young man left home for college. He had received a Christian training, and was a sincere adherent of the Christian Faith. After nearly four years of college life, during which he had specialized in Science, he wrote these words to a friend, "At last I am at perfect intellectual peace;—I no longer believe anything." Apparently he failed to sense the bankruptcy of his own condition. Believing nothing, how could he stand for anything, or fight for anything, or be willing to die for anything? He did not see that, having discarded the Christian interpretation of life, it was incumbent upon him to state a worthier one. In a luminous chapter of his book, "The Reality of Faith," Dr. Newman Smyth points out "the difficulty of not believing." He writes, "As a matter of fact, every man does

44 THE CHRISTIAN CREDENTIALS

believe vastly more than he, or any one else on the face of the earth, ever understood. You believe in oxygen, hydrogen, electricity, and the ultimate particles and forces of matter. You do not understand them any more than you understand what the wings of angels may be made of. . . . A man who tries to sail across this life to the unknown shore without faith, has a much more serious task to perform upon himself than simply to unload himself of so many accustomed beliefs; he may throw overboard human traditions, but to get rid of faith he cannot stop with the cargo; he will have to hew at the knees of the ship; in fact he will have to take out the keel: for all our knowledge, and all our life, so richly furnished, are built upon faith, as the ship is built into the keel.”⁷

Unbelief must account for things. Herbert Spencer truly says, “The assumption of the existence of a First Cause of the Universe is a necessity of thought.” The principle of causality is part of our mental make-up. We seem to be compelled to interpret all phenomena by the principle of causation. The child standing

⁷ “The Reality of Faith,” Newman Smyth, D. D., pp. 100-102.

before a machine asks its parent, "What makes the wheels go round?" In asking that question he is assuming the same kind of attitude toward the universe as that assumed by a Kant, or a Liebnitz, or a Spencer. He is groping his way toward the mystery of *Cause*. It is morally certain that the universe is the product of an Infinite Cause which Christian Faith calls God, or it is the product of a series of finite causes. But a succession of finite causes which never had a beginning is unthinkable. No matter how long the chain of finite causes may be, its first link must be attached to something, or down falls the whole chain. Unbelief, having set aside the Christian Faith, must face the task of accounting for the universe by a succession of finite causes, which is unthinkable. As an honourable and courageous thinker, the unbeliever cannot run away from his task. And he dare not seek escape by falling back upon the absurd idea that all existing things have spontaneously sprung out of absolute nothingness. "Ex nihilo nihil fit"; out of nothing, nothing comes. Multiply zero by infinity, and the result is not infinity, but zero.

He must account for the intelligence of the Nature of Things. Just as certainly as Nature

is interpreted by intelligence does it represent intelligence. The two go together. When I scan the page of a book, I find that there is some relationship between my mental powers and the intelligence reflected on the page. That is only another way of saying that the intelligence of the writer is all of a piece with the intelligence of the reader. I may not accept the teaching of the page. I may dispute some of the statements. I may object to the arguments used. I may criticize the style. But beneath all these matters I detect upon the page the working of a mind akin to my own. If the page were covered by the scrawlings of an idiot it would be utterly meaningless to me. The contents of the page can only be understood by my mind as they are the expression of a mind akin to my own. "The speech of the mad is ridiculous to the sane; the speech of the sane has no meaning to the mad." Can nature be interpreted by mind? Does it unfold itself to reason as a work of art unfolds itself to the artistic sense, or as a mighty oratorio awakens response in the soul of a music-lover? To ask this question is to answer it! All our vast and varied wealth of scientific knowledge is due to the fact that there is an element of intelli-

gence in Nature which corresponds to intelligence in man. The two are akin. They are both the expression of a single supreme intelligence. That supreme intelligence we call God. Can unbelief explain this situation more reasonably and more convincingly?

Unbelief must account for the origin of life. It must face the stern fact that an unthinkable chasm separates the non-living from the living. Biogenesis, or the principle that all life is derived from life, still holds the field, and the most persistent efforts to dislodge it have failed. The meaning of this fact may be made clearer by the use of a hypothetical case. The Government of the United States may decide to create, equip and endow the greatest scientific school in the world. We can imagine it manned by a select group of experts, including chemists, biologists, anatomists, physicists and anthropologists. The national government stands ready to furnish this institution with anything that it asks, in order that Science may be unhampered in its onward march. Suppose I go to these experts and ask them to unite their efforts in the production of a grain of wheat from dead matter, stipulating that it shall contain the germ of life, making it capable of

growth and reproduction. The scientists in question would resent my proposal, probably telling me that it was not the function of Science to perform miracles. But Life is here. And according to scientific authority the matter of the universe at one time absolutely prohibited the possibility of life. If a group of the greatest scientists in the world cannot *now* produce life from dead matter, how could it have been produced when there was no mind to direct and no hand to shape? If it cannot be done now under the management of the most brilliant minds, how could it have been effected in the utter absence of all intelligence?

Unbelief must answer this! The principle of evolution, with which the name of Darwin will ever be honourably associated, does not meet the situation. Evolution does not create. Only that can be evolved which is first of all involved. In effect Darwin said, "If you will give me an indefinite number of germs of life in a suitable environment, I will show you what wonderful developments they may assume." This was equivalent to a demand for an indefinite number of miracles with which to start upon his most entrancing theory. The man who discards belief in the free action of a

creative will must look this situation squarely in the face and account for it. He must not use words lightly and flippantly to cover the unthinkable margin between the non-living and the living. Let it be distinctly understood that evolution does not create life, that Science has never yet discovered a clear case of spontaneous generation, and that Darwin would be among the first to concede that, as far as human intelligence can discern, life only came from life.

Unbelief must also account for the origin of mind. The German scientist Karl Vogt did not hesitate to make this statement, "The brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile." The only difference between Vogt and materialists in general is that he was more frank and outspoken than the others. His position is the logical conclusion of the premises of materialism. Assert the reality of thought and at the same time deny the spiritual elements of experience, and the conclusion is obvious—thought is to the brain as bile is to the liver. Now bile and liver are in the same category of things. Like produces like. Bile can be stated in terms of magnitude, colour and chemical analysis, just as can the liver. Can

thought be so stated? Can the scientist place thought beneath his microscope and describe it in chemical terms? Can he even *find* it? Vogt's daring statement utterly breaks down. The brain does *not* secrete thought as the liver secretes bile. Was not James Russell Lowell face to face with the truth on this matter when he wrote

*We who believe life's bases rest
Beyond the probe of chemic test
Still know and feel that Thou art near?*

The poet was the real scientist. Thought, with all its wealth and wonder, finds its origin in that which lies "beyond the probe of chemic test."

Unbelief must account for all that is highest and greatest in man, or its whole philosophy breaks down. It is in the realm of thought that we find man at his highest. And the higher he rises in this realm, the more impossible becomes the task of materialism in seeking to explain him. It is not difficult to point out the striking resemblances between man and the highest order of the apes. Theology does not deny these resemblances. Is Science willing to admit the still more striking *differences*

between man and the highest order of apes? For the differences vastly outweigh and outnumber the resemblances! Man has moved upward from lowly origins to almost supernal heights of life. He has built stately homes and splendid cities. He has tunnelled the mountains and bridged the rivers. He directs floating palaces across the oceans, and has coaxed the suns and stars to tell him their secrets. He sends his wireless message across a continent, and even flies beyond the clouds. He has created priceless treasures of literature, and by their ministries the noblest of the dead still speak to the living. He has given to the world works of art which have endured for hundreds of years, and will endure for thousands yet to come. He has projected his prayers and his faith far into the unseen, for uncounted millions have declared with Paul—"our citizenship is in the Eternal." The consciousness of immortality has flooded his being with a light that never was on sea or land. He has laughed at impossibilities, and on the loftiest heights he waves the flag of victory. Where is the ape? As far as science can tell us, exactly where he was a hundred thousand years ago. He dwells in the same haunts, eats

the same food, and pursues the same habits. He has never yet kindled a fire, cooked a meal, written a line, woven a garment, or risen one inch above the level of instinctive life. If science can prove that the highest form of animal life was, in the physical sense, the original progenitor of the human race, let it do so. In that case, however, one fact is obvious. *Something extraordinary happened.* The chasm between the ape and man is so vast that only some extraordinary experience could have bridged it. Faith sees the creative hand of God in this situation. That Faith is throughout rational. It feels itself sustained by the principle of inherent probability. Standing in the august Hall of Reason it is prepared to stake very much, if not all, on the simple affirmation, "Looking at the vast expanse separating the animal from the human world, it is much more reasonable to suppose that something extraordinary happened, than that the animal, unaided, unguided, crossed that chasm." What was that something extraordinary but the free action of an Infinite and Interested Intelligence? "Man became a living soul."⁸

⁸ Genesis 2:7.

The biologist must remember that he has not an eternity to draw upon for the accumulation of very slow and very small changes. The moment he assumes that position he crosses swords with the great physicists like Tait and Kelvin!

The constructive task of Materialism is an impossible one. Things are as they are. They demand some explanation which shall be stamped with the marks of probability and reasonableness. The task of Faith is not an easy one, nor are its burdens light. We admit the difficulties which belief must face, and the sincerity with which many awkward questions are raised. But to run away from the difficulties of Faith is to run into the still greater difficulties of unbelief. Yet along one or other of these two pathways the inquiring mind of man must travel. It is not a rigid dogmatism, nor an unreasoning prejudice, but a clear-eyed and open-minded appreciation of all the facts of the case which prompts us to claim Inherent Probability as a valid Credential of the Christian Faith.

III

THE CHARACTER OF THE FOUNDER

THE self-disclosure of God constitutes the essential truth of the Christian religion. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by (or *in*) his Son."¹ God has spoken. Christianity is not a human evolution, but a Divine revelation. Should it be stripped of this truth, Faith would represent little more than a series of hopes, aspirations and struggles. Under such conditions it might have some value, as other spiritual movements have value, but it could never speak to a needy world in terms of final authority.

We have shown that all the probabilities of the case point to some form of Divine revelation to man. There is nothing in the constitution of human nature, nor in the system of things surrounding it, that precludes some such self-disclosure on the part of God.

The question arises,—“What are men will-

¹ Hebrews 1:1.

ing to accept as reasonable credentials of such a Faith? ”

Here we meet much inconsistency, if not downright self-contradiction. One can easily imagine a dialogue between an ordinary unbeliever and a Christian apologist of the older school:

UNBELIEVER: The Christian Faith makes a great demand on me when it asks me to accept and adopt it. Before I can accede to this demand it must give me some convincing proof that its claims are valid.

APOLOGIST (of the older school): Very well. Think of the act of Jesus in feeding the multitude with five loaves and two fishes; think of His act in giving sight to the blind; think of Him raising Lazarus from the dead!

UNBELIEVER: I cannot accept these statements since they involve miracle. I am quite convinced of the truth of the words “Miracles do not happen,” as stated by Squire Wendover in “Robert Elsmere.”

In other words, the attitude of the unbeliever is likely to be as follows—“I cannot believe in the Christian religion unless it is guaranteed to me by miracle; but unfortunately I cannot believe in miracle because, as every one knows, miracle involves a violation of the laws of nature.”

This is not an unfair statement of the attitude that many assume toward the Christian evangel.

For many years a great battle has been fought around the word miracle. Possibly much of the bitterness of the conflict has been due to misunderstanding, and to an inadequate definition of terms. It might be well to go beyond this historic quarrel, seeking truth by another route. Surely it would be fair for the apologist to say to the unbeliever—"Granting the existence of a free and intelligent God, how would you expect Him to come into contact with men, and reveal Himself to the race?"

Christianity teaches that God meets the spiritual needs of men, discloses Himself to them, becomes their Helper and Redeemer, and gives them victory over the evils of the world, *through a person*; and it presents the character of that Person as one of the greatest Credentials of the Faith.

Could any other view be more reasonable? It is obvious that religion deals with personality and personal relations. Revelation through personality would appear to be the most probable method.

It is certain that we reveal ourselves to our children by immediate contact. Not by mere messages, verbal statements or mechanical systems do we make ourselves known to them. It is almost impossible to suggest any form of personal contact more direct than that which obtains between parent and child. Our children come to know us through our care for them, our comradeship with them, and our sacrifices in their behalf. Personality dominates everything. Is it not probable that God's revelation will assume a similar form? When the Mormons seek to assure us that God wrote a revelation of Himself and hid it away in a stone box, miraculously directing the footsteps of Joseph Smith to its discovery, every rational and spiritual sensibility is repelled by the crudeness of the idea. We are impressed by the sheer improbability of the whole procedure. The deep and awful needs of the world can never be met by a mere series of statements, no matter whether verbal or written. As Dr. Denney says—"The mere telling is nothing." Truth to be effective must be personalized. It is more than a mere accident that Christianity recognizes this, and makes personality the vehicle of truth.

JESUS WAS A HISTORICAL PERSON

This fact has been disputed. In some quarters it is disputed to-day. In seeking to destroy the historical fact of Christ, unbelief has shown a daring marked by a certain degree of logical consistency. The value of Christ to Christianity was too great for unbelief to ignore. As Dr. Denney truly says,—“He is more to us who believe in Him than Moses to the Jew, Sakya Muni to the Buddhist, or Mohammed to the Moslem.”² The value of the Hebrew religion would abide were the personality of Moses to be reduced to a myth. The contributions of Buddhism to the thought and life of millions would remain if the name of its founder were never uttered again. It is not so with the Founder and the fortunes of the Christian Faith. Apparently Jesus staked everything upon Himself. Sceptic though he was, Renan was not far from the truth when he said, “Jesus taught nothing but Himself.” If unbelief could remove the name of Christ from the field of historic fact it would achieve for itself its greatest triumph. It has boldly attempted this. During the first decade of this century Professor Drews lectured to great

² “Studies in Theology,” James Denney, D. D., p. 28.

masses of men in Berlin. The denial of the historic reality of Jesus constituted his theme. The popularity of his lectures was ominous. It was an unconscious preparation for the act of Germany a decade later, in shocking the conscience of the world by initiating the greatest and most criminal war of the ages. In England Mr. J. M. Robertson and others embarked upon a similar effort, but they have not met with much general response from the public. It is not too much to say that every unprejudiced thinker finds it easier to accept all the narratives which gather about the person of Jesus in the Gospels, even though each might involve miracle, than to account for Christianity without the historic person of Christ.

It is contended that some of the ideas of the Christian Faith can be traced, perhaps in cruder form, to the systems of Babylon, Persia and Greece, especially Babylon. Possibly! But to admit this is to suggest the gropings of ancient systems toward the Light rather than the denial of the One who was God's Light to a darkened world. Many years ago Dr. W. B. Pope used a short sentence covering a great truth, "Heathenism is but perverted Deism."

There is a sharp and shallow ingenuity that can disprove nearly everything, even the things of unquestioned historic validity. Archbishop Whately gave a convincing evidence of this in his classic work, "Historic Doubts Concerning the Existence of Napoleon." The distinguished prelate clearly showed that the same arguments used to disprove New Testament history might be used just as consistently to disprove the existence of Napoleon.

When a noted scholar like Jensen writes a thousand pages to show that all Bible history is but legend, and that the outstanding personalities of both Testaments, including our Lord Himself, are only mythical forms of a Babylonian epic, one thing is sure. That one sure and obvious conclusion is that unbelief is compelled to resort to desperate expedients. In the name of reason it acts with wild and reckless unreason.

For what are the facts regarding Jesus? Reduced to an irreducible minimum, what do we find? In the New Testament we are presented with the life and death of one whom Faith regards as the greatest Person of history. His character was without a stain; He embodied the highest graces and virtues which the

human mind has ever been able to conceive; He furnished ideals of conduct which, after the flight of two thousand years, are far beyond our highest attainment; He stirred the sleeping forces of the spirit-world of His day as the waters of some inland lake are swept by a wind from the hills; He inspired such loyalty on the part of His immediate followers as made them face the greatest martyrdoms of history almost without a tremor. Now if Jesus was not a historic person it is obvious that He was nothing more than an artistic creation. In other words, we are asked to believe that this wondrous figure is the creation of a group of illiterate followers, steeped in a narrow Judaism, themselves the creatures of a sordid and cruel age. This, at least in substance, is the position which must be taken by those who question the historic reality of Jesus. Let any man who is headed in such a direction recall the ringing challenge of Theodore Parker, "It would take a Christ to forge a Christ."

If one is looking in all the realms of life and literature for downright intellectual perversity, one may surely find it in these lines from the pen of Professor Schweitzer,—“The Jesus

of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom on earth, and died to give his work its final consecration, *never had any existence*. He is a figure endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb. . . . Not the historical Jesus, but the Spirit which goes forth from him, and in the spirits of men strives for new influence and rule, is that which overcomes the world!"³ It was in reference to this kind of drivel that Dr. Ballard wrote: "Even a child may be trusted to see that this amounts to affirming that a superstructure acted before it came into existence, by laying its own foundations." It would be difficult to frame a juster or more withering criticism. In some measure we must share the feeling of horror, felt by many devout believers, at such mingled impudence and irreverence, but we need not rest finally in such an emotion. The attacks of such men upon the historic reality of Jesus is, on their part, an unconscious tribute to Him. It is their confession that as long as the Person of Jesus stands as a fact of history, Christianity

³ "The Quest of the Historical Jesus," Professor Schweitzer, pp. 396-399.

stands with it. They are logical enough to see that little is gained for unbelief by seeking to dislodge this or that part of the Gospel narrative as long as the greatest fact of all survives. It is like stripping a tiny twig or two from a massive, living tree. Hence the bolder and more desperate, but utterly hopeless attack.

Whatever Jesus was, we may be sure that the overwhelming mass of sincere men and women will concede that He was a real person, occupying a definite place in the life and fortunes of mankind.

JESUS EMBODIES THE SINLESS LIFE

Throughout the whole of the New Testament the character of Jesus is presented as sinless. Unprejudiced study of the Gospel story shows a spirit of independence on the part of each writer. It cannot be said that any one writer is the slave of another. Indeed, the freedom with which each writer describes the same events has been made the target of sceptical attack on the charge of discrepancies. Unbelief is hard to please. If two narratives vary in their wording they are very likely to be discredited because of their discrepancies; if they closely agree, one writer

or the other will probably be called a copyist. Admitting considerable variation of statement, we cannot but be impressed with the sinlessness of the Master as evidenced by each of the narratives, and by every reference to His life in the Epistles. This is a truth which is not so much proved as assumed, and evidenced at each stage of the history.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes Him as "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."⁴ This may be regarded as the substance of the whole of the New Testament in its verdict on the sinless life of the Master. The words used to portray this phase of our Lord's life are simple, but very definite. He is described as "holy." The word in the original Greek is not the one frequently used to indicate the setting aside of some object for sacred use; it means rather a character marked by pure and unquestioned goodness. He is also described as "harmless"; He manifested the qualities of tenderness, compassion and benevolence.

Nothing ever emanated from His person which even tended to hurt or harm anything of worth. He was "undefiled." He moved

⁴Hebrews 7:26.

through an evil environment, walked up and down the paths of an evil world, came into close contact with the sinful and sordid lives of His day, yet was never tarnished. "He was separate from sinners." They surrounded Him, pressed in upon Him, ate and drank with Him,—yet, somehow or other, never defiled Him. He was so near to them that He clasped their hands, while their children played around His feet, yet He was "separate" from them, even as the lily is separate from the soil in which it grows. Jesus attacked sinful customs, vested interests and privileged evils, with the inevitable result that He made bitter personal enemies. His acts were closely scrutinized, and every word that fell from His lips was studied in order to furnish the material for an indictment. The typical Pharisee and Sadducee would have given much for proof of any moral lapse on His part. Unconsciously Pontius Pilate spoke for all of Christ's critics when he confessed, "I find in Him no fault at all." For nineteen centuries keen and critical eyes have looked upon Him, and His character has been subjected to the severest tests. The results of these enquiries have endorsed the verdict of Pilate.

There was not the slightest suggestion of personal evil in Christ's own consciousness. He summoned others to repent, yet He never repented. He heard other men confess their sins, but He never made any confession of sin; He taught others to pray for forgiveness, yet in all His reported prayers He never besought forgiveness for Himself. He challenged others to convict Him, and as Dr. Denney very truly says "it would have been the worst insincerity if, when He challenged others, or rather defied them, to convict Him of sin, He had been able to convict Himself."⁵

Personal holiness has been the haunting dream and the impassioned quest of the noblest saints through all the intervening ages. To attain this great spiritual objective they have wept and prayed and fasted. Adopting mistaken forms of spiritual action they have even resorted to penance and self-torture, hoping by the pains of the body to atone for the sins of the soul. They did this to gain something which Jesus was *in Himself*. This phase of the subject has been eloquently stated by Fairbairn, "Stones have been worn smooth by the

⁵"Studies in Theology," James Denney, D. D., p. 41.

knees of His penitents; martyrs have died at the stake for His name, rejoicing amid the flames and insensible to pain; the poor have been served more assiduously than He ever served them, and the diseased have been ministered to with a care and a tenderness He never surpassed. The hermit or the monk who forsook the world that he might give himself wholly to the worship of God, has in bodily mortification gone beyond anything that is recorded of Jesus; while the nun, who has hidden herself in the cloister that she may attain whiteness of soul, has surrendered herself to a severer discipline than He ever practised. Yet these are but the strenuous labours of persons who are miserable through their great desire to win by personal effort what He possessed by nature. He lived embosomed in Deity, filled, penetrated, transfigured by a God . . . of transcendant ethical severity, whose truth could suffer no falsehood, who was the light which could bear no darkness, the good which could tolerate no evil, the life which overcame death, the love that cast out fear.”⁶

These words of the British scholar reveal

⁶ “The Philosophy of the Christian Religion,” A. M. Fairbairn, D. D., pp. 365, 366.

something of the essential difference between Jesus and the greatest saints of history. He stands in a class by Himself. Is there a blemish which His most devoted follower would remove? Or can that same follower think of some grace or virtue which, added to the figure of his Master, would be a spiritual acquisition? His uniqueness is an established fact.

In the ranks of unbelief there have been men who were touched with reverence and sincerity. We believe that they were mistaken in their conclusions, but they were honestly mistaken. Apparently they wished to believe, but were intellectually afraid to do so. These men were awed and moved by the unique goodness of Jesus. Of such men we may take W. E. Lecky and John Stuart Mill as types. In his "History of European Morals" Lecky refers to Jesus as "an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love, has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions, has been not only the highest pattern of virtue but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short

years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortation of moralists.”

Mill spoke as eloquently and almost as dogmatically upon the historical reality of Jesus as any Christian theologian could have done. The following words have been frequently quoted, but never were they more timely than now. “It is of no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of His followers. Who among His disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? . . . When this preëminent genius is combined with the qualities of probably the greatest moral reformer and martyr to the mission who ever existed on earth, religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching upon this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeav-

our so to live that Christ would approve our life.”⁷

As one reads these words from the pen of the great English liberal, one marvels how he could believe so much without believing vastly more. Here he preaches, almost with the warmth of an evangelist, the spiritual supremacy of Jesus. He accepts a position far in advance of much modern unbelief in his admiration of Jesus. Had Mill clearly thought out the *constituents* of Christ's character, and the basis of its supremacy, one feels sure he would have been compelled to proceed still further toward the camp of Faith.

America has produced few literary men of finer and more exquisite tastes than Sidney Lanier. Had his life been spared he might have become the Browning of our nation. In “The Crystal” the keen-visioned poet skillfully appraises the great outstanding figures of thought throughout the ages. His criticisms are kindly and gracious, and therefore all the more effective. Shakespeare's “small, curious quibble”; his “too-silly shifts of maids that mask as men”; his too frequent resort to “laboured lewd discourse”—these and other

⁷ “Essays on Theism,” John Stuart Mill, pp. 106, 107.

blemishes are exposed. The “drear harangues” of Homer; the “iron stringencies” of Socrates; the “comic-dreadful” wars of Milton; the goal of “nothing but nothingness” which was all that Buddha had to offer needy man;—these are all exquisitely stated. His briefer allusions to other religious and literary world-leaders are still more skillful. Here are some: “Aurelius fine, oft superfine”; “mild saint à Kempis, overmild”; “rapt Behmen, rapt too far”; “high Swedenborg, o’er toppling”; “Emerson, most wise, that yet in finding wisdom, lost thyself sometimes”; “tense Keats, with angels’ nerves, where men’s were better.” There is not one of the world’s greatest leaders who, in Lanier’s vision, is free from defect. Not one speaks with a universal voice addressed to all lands, all ages, all classes. Then comes the poet’s tribute to the great exception.

*But Thee, but Thee, O Sovereign Seer of time,
 But Thee, O poets’ Poet, Wisdom’s Tongue,
 But Thee, O man’s best Man, O love’s best Love,
 O perfect life in perfect labour writ,
 O all men’s Comrade, Servant, King or Priest,—
 What if or yet, what mole, what flaw, what lapse,
 What least defect or shadow of defect,
 What rumour, tattled by an enemy,
 Of inference loose, what lack of grace*

*Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's, or death's,—
Oh, what amiss may I forgive in Thee,
Jesus, Good Paragon, thou Crystal Christ?*

The mightiest thinkers have acknowledged His supremacy. Farrar says: "He closed all the history of the past, and inaugurated all the history of the future." Hegel was convinced that divinity and humanity met in Him as nowhere else. At St. Helena, Napoleon declared: "Between Him and whoever else in the world there is no possible form of comparison." Fairbairn says, "The most serious reproach to a Christian man or society is to have failed to obey the law of Christ."⁸ The great Christian poets reach their highest notes when they hymn His praise. Even the ribald Voltaire was impressed by His moral glory. Rousseau was compelled to admit "if the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God."⁹

In transparent goodness, in all the varied forms of spiritual excellence to which the human mind can react, in graces which have

⁸ "The Philosophy of the Christian Religion," A. M. Fairbairn, D. D., p. 390.

⁹ "Jesus," F. W. Farrar, D. D., "Encyclopædia Britannica," Vol. XIII, p. 669.

compelled the admiration of critics and doubters as well as devoted believers, Jesus stands alone. He shines with a splendour that is solitary. Every man who seeks to be a better man and who tries to make this a better world will admit that the character of Jesus is the great objective of all his dreams and efforts. In such case Faith can well afford to be indifferent to the judgment of the man who does not seek virtue for himself, or moral progress for the world. The verdict of every man who is mentally and morally qualified for a place on the jury is one with the verdict of Pilate: "I find in Him no fault." The most exacting spiritual judgment must admit that the character of Jesus is a mosaic from which nothing can be subtracted, and to which nothing can be added, without the infliction of injury. Unbelief must explain how this unique character can be either the creator or the product of a great illusion. Could a character of unique and transparent goodness deliberately formulate an unauthorized religion, inducing His followers to live in a world of pious pretence and make-believe, doing this in the name of a Holy God? Or could such a character, embodying the highest graces that

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mortal man can ever see or know, be the resultant of sheer illusion and shadowy dream? If unbelief is to claim credit for logical thinking, it must meet and answer these questions, and must do so in such a way as to carry conviction to unprejudiced minds.

This sinless life is associated with an official status. Jesus did not live His life in studied detachment from the strenuous interests of mankind. He entered the fray. He took a foremost place in the busy world. He touched life at a thousand points. He raised His voice above the din and confusion of His age, and the ages that have followed. He voiced judgments that cut like a sword into the inmost thoughts, the subtlest motives and the mightiest purposes and passions of men. In this way He presents a double exposure to His critics. There is the exposure of personal character; there is the exposure of official status. Theoretically at least, a President or a Premier may be a model of saintliness and yet be utterly incompetent as a statesman. Not seldom does it happen that a man of purest motives and worthiest intentions proves himself unwise, if not dangerous, in leadership.

Our Lord's severest critics have witnessed to the transcendent goodness of His character! He stands before us without stain, blemish or defect.

But what of His official status? Can He be trusted as Leader, Teacher, and Master? Is He entitled to our willing and trustful obedience?

It is impossible to read the Gospels without being impressed by the tone of spiritual authority with which Jesus spoke. His pronouncements upon life and conduct were never uttered with faltering accents. He never indulged the note of apology. He did not argue or debate with men: He commanded them. He always assumed the function of Master in dealing with the things of the spirit. True, He declared, "I am among you as one that serveth," but that attitude of service was, in itself, the announcement of a sublime ideal of life, an ideal almost incredible to the Pagan world of His day, an ideal also which Christendom itself has not yet fully grasped. When the term "Master" or "Teacher" was addressed to Him, He always accepted it as though by right. The claims which He asserted placed Him in the forefront of every

religious problem and conflict. The value of the credential which Faith presents in the person of Jesus will be largely enhanced if, in addition to His sinless life, it can assert His supremacy as Teacher and Leader.

No student of the Gospels can ever regard Jesus as a mere echo. Even if some resemblance can be found between a few of His sayings and those of other world-teachers, it is impossible to infer that He consciously borrowed from them. Who would dare to assert that He ever had recourse to the teachings of Confucius or Buddha or Zoroaster? It is almost positively certain that He did not. He had no modern library embodying world-literature which He could consult. The Jews were among the most exclusive of all races, and had no place in their culture for the views of far-distant leaders of thought. A touch of imagination will enable us to portray the mean, restricted, narrow, petty life of Nazareth! It was a little straggling hamlet of Galilee, entirely untouched by ministries akin to those of modern culture. Jesus showed the most perfect knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures and ordinances, and He claimed to be the goal to which they all converged; in vain, how-

ever, do we look for a single instance in which His utterances are coloured by Greek, Persian, or Babylonian thought. We cannot read the Gospel story without the conviction that the teachings of Jesus were the outstreamings of His own deepest being. He shines by no borrowed light. No great figure of history owed less to ancestors and contemporaries, if we except the influence of His mother upon Him. From the first day of His public ministry to the last He never relinquished His place as Supreme Commander in the realm of religious experience. "We cannot but be amazed that the church has not collected His commandments and set them in a position of eminence over her altars." "Yet over the altars of the church it is usually the Decalogue of Moses that is inscribed in letters of gold."¹⁰

The position of spiritual primacy asserted by Jesus is seen in His treatment of the most authoritative religious teachers and institutions of His day. He claimed the right to pass judgment on the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures, and to proclaim His own authority beyond anything inhering in the greatest men

¹⁰ "The Commandments of Jesus," R. F. Horton, D. D., p. 3.

of the Hebrew State and Church. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . but *I* say unto you."¹¹ This attitude of final spiritual authority is taken again and again. In each of these instances the higher form of spiritual conduct is unfolded; in each case it is obvious that men are called by Him to a worthier and more wondrous experience; in each case it is clear that manifold forms of mischief which are possible under the rulings of those "of old time" are utterly impossible under the higher principle which He enunciates. This may be seen in the study of a single instance. Traditional Hebrew law, when dealing with the problem of enmity, stipulated "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." In other words,—“you must love those who are good to you, but you are under no obligation to love those who have injured you.” One cannot measure the amount of tragedy and moral evil that can be produced in our world while still keeping technically within the limits of this law. But when Jesus says, “But *I* say unto you, Love your enemies . . . that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven,”

¹¹ Matthew 5: 21; 27: 33, 38, 43.

it is clear that we have a rule of conduct from which all forms of revenge are excluded. Had nominal Christendom taken this teaching seriously, there would have been no world-war. It is utterly impossible for the human mind to conceive a Diviner law for life than universal love and service.

The typical Jew was exceedingly sensitive to anything reflecting upon the outstanding figures of his nation. Yet Jesus compared Himself with the leading characters of Hebrew history, to their disadvantage. "A greater than Solomon is here," "a greater than Jonah is here." He revised the laws dealing with the Sabbath, and with marriage, and intimated that the greatest spiritual value of the Old Testament lay in the fact that all its lines of teaching, ritual and prophecy led up to Himself.

It is doubtful if any historic person asserted himself more frequently than did Jesus. The terms which He used were the most august and impressive within the compass of human language. In the midst of a darkened race, when so much was confused, He declared, "I am the Light of the World." In the midst of a world blighted by so much hardness and

cruelty, and governed by a political machine as unpitying as Rome, He declared, "I am the good Shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Facing the ravages of death, and looking upon a world ripped and scarred by graves He declared, "I am the Resurrection, and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." When men sought truth from Him He declared, "I am the Truth." When puzzled and baffled minds appealed to Him to show them the way to life eternal He replied, "I am the Way . . . and the Life." He identified virtue, goodness and purity with Himself. Surely no such line of teaching has ever been adopted since the first day that one man tried to help another.

Even a casual reader of the Gospels must be impressed by the unhesitating way in which Jesus imposes His terms of discipleship. It is true that the blessings which He imparts are in the nature of free gifts. He is the author of the doctrines of grace. But salvation is never cheapened in His teachings. No great leader ever demanded greater sacrifices from His followers. He dared to project His claims between the sacred bonds that bind parent to

child, husband to wife, brother to sister. He not only demanded from His followers a love greater than the love of life itself, but a love greater than that consecrated to the nearest and dearest ones, and this devotion was claimed not so much for a cause as for Himself. His appeal is "for *my* sake." He does not ask men to be willing to suffer torture and death for a theory, or a dogma, or even an enterprise, but "for *my* sake." And history tells few more wonderful stories than the one which describes how men accepted this appeal. They answered Him in terms of such fullness of surrender as the world had never seen.

Why were the early Christians so furiously persecuted for nearly two and a half centuries? What was the charge levelled against them? What was the test question addressed to them? It is doubtful if any Christian believer was ever questioned regarding his belief in the existence of God, or the immortality of the soul, or the forgiveness of sins! The test question put to the aged Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, fairly represents the whole of the persecutions urged against the Christian movement. A demand was made upon him to curse the name and person of Christ. His reply has

become a classic: "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has done me nothing but good, how then can I curse Him, my Lord and my Saviour?" "Men were lit as torches in Nero's garden, and women flung to the wild beasts of the amphitheatre; and for what? For a system, for a cause, for a church? They had not enough knowledge of theory to pass a Sunday-school examination; they had no doctrine of the Holy Trinity, nor of the Person of Jesus, nor of His sacrifice, nor of Grace. They died, in their simplicity, for Him 'whom having not seen ye love,' and the name of the Crucified was the last word that trembled on their dying lips."¹² Critical scholarship might suggest that the early Christian martyrs were not quite so devoid of the elements of theology, but as a general statement of the charge on which they were persecuted, and the principle of personal devotion to their Lord by which they were animated and sustained, the lines of Dr. Watson express the simple historic fact. The various charges of impiety, disloyalty and disobedience preferred against the early Christians were only the indirect forms of the one

¹² "The Mind of the Master," John Watson, D. D. (Ian McLaren), pp. 192-193.

principal charge—their devotion to, and worship of, Christ.

Other great figures in history have commanded a loyal and enthusiastic following, but in such instances materialism has been a great factor. Wealth, estates, the lure of court life, political office and preferment, and the glamour of military enterprise have all played their part in fostering the power of personal leadership. In this respect Jesus had nothing. He “had not where to lay His head.” As far as we know He had no material thing on the day of His death except His raiment, and for that His executioners gambled. No world-ruler or dignitary stood ready to render assistance or encouragement either to Him or His disciples. The triumph of Jesus over the hearts and minds of men was, in the most absolute sense, a spiritual triumph. Where does history furnish a parallel? Can any honest seeker for truth question the right of Faith to present these phases of the Person of Christ as a mighty guarantee of the truth of the Christian religion?

It is obvious that no consistent appraisal of the Person of Jesus can close at this stage.

Many of His claims and achievements would remain untouched. As we look at these, pondering their meaning and patiently tracing their significance, we are haunted by one question from which there is no escape. The substance of that question is this:—What lay in the deepest depths of Christ's consciousness? Or the question may take this form:—In the last analysis, what was that consciousness? I believe there is only one satisfactory answer.

JESUS HAD A GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

This is a statement that should be made only by one whose every mental and spiritual faculty is convinced of its truth. It is doubtful if any affirmation concerning Jesus can go beyond it; it is certain to my mind that many of the facts of His inner and outer life can never be interpreted except upon the whole-hearted acceptance of this statement. Belief in the God-consciousness of Jesus rests upon something vastly more than the historic fact that He claimed the Messiah's office and function. The study of Hebrew Messianic hopes and dreams is not an easy one. A variety of ideas, some of them arbitrary and fanciful, gathered around the main conception. A parallel may be found in

Christian circles concerning the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ. From the first era of the Christian Church onward there has been a place for this belief in the creeds and confessions. In stately dignity and fitting reserve it is found in the Apostles' Creed: "He ascended into Heaven . . . from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." It is found in similar terms in the *Te Deum* of St. Ambrose of Milan: "We believe that Thou shalt come, to be our Judge." On the other hand it is found in the ranks of spiritual fanaticism in a variety of grotesque and extravagant forms, involving violent Scriptural exegesis, inflicting serious maltreatment of spiritual taste, and embodying a spirit of intolerance not easy to forgive.

It was so with the Hebrew belief in a coming Messiah. Believing themselves to be the chosen people of Jehovah, elected by Him with some unique spiritual vocation in view, the Jews looked to the coming of the anointed one as God's guarantee of their peculiar destiny. It was as though they said, "If Jehovah has chosen us to be His special people, for a special purpose, how can we realize that end without a Messiah? We are surrounded by enemies.

We have disloyalties and desertions even among our own ranks. In some wonderful way Jehovah must come to us in a Person,—an anointed one! He must help us to fulfill our election. Then the world will wonder, and believe. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. . . . Yea, all Kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him.” Undoubtedly the national expectation of a Messiah grew out of the nation’s belief in its own Divine election. I do not suggest that the idea of Messiahship necessarily involved the idea of Incarnation, yet it was expected that the Messiah would be an exceptional personality, possibly God-anointed and God-inspired rather than God-incarnate. Jesus met this national expectation. He could not evade it. The moment He asserted any exceptional claim He would inevitably touch the nation’s Messianic hope through the association of ideas. If frankly and openly challenged as to whether He felt Himself to be the Messiah, how could He answer? Sometimes we are asked questions which cannot be answered with a plain

Yes or No. "Art Thou the Messiah?" In simply answering "Yes" Jesus would have run the risk of claiming to fulfill the extravagant, if not fantastic expectations that gathered around the Messianic idea. If the propaganda and procedure of later pretenders to Messiahship are a fair reflection of popular taste, we can see how Jesus would have been embarrassed by such a situation. As Dr. Stanton writes, "The mass of men thought chiefly of victory over their enemies and the bringing in of great material prosperity, while the truly pious dwelt on the remission of sins" (Luke 1: 77).¹⁸

Could Jesus have answered "No"? Such an answer was unthinkable to Him with His sense of a Divine vocation. May not this explain the peculiar answer He gave to the Baptist's appeal? John was not only impatient; he was mistrustful. The apparent inaction of Jesus was very strange to the hero who lay languishing in prison! Hence the sharp and abrupt challenge: "Art thou he that should come, *or . . .*" Apparently John had his misgivings. The question seemed to call for a simple Yes or No. Jesus pointed to

¹⁸ Hastings Bible Dictionary, Vol. 3, p. 355, "Messiah," Dr. Vincent H. Stanton.

the records of His own ministry: benevolence, compassion, and the proclamation of the redeeming love and mercy of God. He said in effect, "Let these facts furnish the answer." He *did* claim to be the Messiah, but not the Messiah that answered to all the worldly and sordid expectations that gathered around the essential idea. Jesus *did* claim to be God's greatest and best gift to the Hebrew nation. This truth is clearly worked out by Robertson Smith in his article on "Messiah." "When we look at the heartfelt longing for a leader in the way of righteousness and acceptance with God which underlies the aspiration after political deliverance, we see that it was in no mere spirit of accommodation to prevailing language that Jesus did not disdain the name in which all the hopes of the Old Testament were gathered up."¹⁴ In other words, Jesus definitely claimed, as before the High Priest, to be God's Messiah in the truest and most spiritual meaning of that term. "In Jesus this (Messianic) hope was fulfilled, and this line of prediction and expectation found its end. Jews in our own day have borne witness that if He was not the true

¹⁴ "Encyclopædia Britannica" (Peale reprint), Vol. 16, p. 56.

Messiah, God never afterward sent a prophet to reprove men for believing in Him.”¹⁵

THE GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS OF JESUS INCLUDED
FACTORS HIGHER AND GREATER THAN
ANY MESSIANIC VOCATION

He claimed the right to forgive sins. Over and over again He asserted this right. The evidence of the Gospels indicates that Christ's attitude toward all truly penitent souls was embodied in the words, “Thy sins are forgiven.”¹⁶ This expression was a formula of absolution, pronounced upon His own initiative and on His own responsibility, as though the sins which were cancelled had been committed against Himself. There was a kind of logical consistency about the retort of His critics—“Who can forgive sins but God only?”¹⁷ Sin is more than mistake, or arrested development, or accidental failure. Sin is rebellion against God. We commit injuries against each other, but sin as such would be impossible in a purely mechanical and ma-

¹⁵ “Outline of Christian Theology,” Wm. N. Clark, D. D., p. 160.

¹⁶ Mark 2:5.

¹⁷ Mark 2:7.

terial universe. Every intelligent Jew was familiar with the Psalmist's view of moral evil: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." He would be just as familiar with the same sinner's plea for pardon, "Have mercy upon me, O God." In all Old Testament literature there is not the slightest trace of any priest, prophet, or religious teacher daring to arrogate to himself the prerogative of forgiveness. Jesus did so.

"By coming forward as incarnate pardon He proclaimed His ability to lead the sinful, there and then, into the Father's presence. His mercy, as they saw it, was a sure guarantee of God's mercy. But when we think it out, clearly forgiveness is a Divine miracle, something which in its infinite marvel is inexplicable by the resources of nature or humanity; it presupposes the very grace and might of the Eternal. By the claim to impart peace of conscience, Jesus laid His hand, with quiet assurance, on a unique prerogative, and by its exercise He opened the Kingdom of Heaven to believers."¹⁸

Jesus professed an exceptional relation to

¹⁸ "The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ," H. R. Macintosh, D. D., p. 32.

God. This is seen in His assertion of a unique knowledge of God. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son." There is simply no escape from the tremendous implication of these words. Their meaning is clear. Whatever knowledge of God might have been possessed by prophets, psalmists and saints was *revealed* knowledge, while *His* knowledge was direct and unmediated. He is Himself the revealer. In His own consciousness therefore, Jesus stands in a separate category of spiritual being. In interpreting this verse Bishop Ellicott writes: "No one knew the Son as such in all the ineffable mystery of His being and His work but the Father: no one fully entered into the Fatherhood of God but He whose relation to Him had been from eternity one of sonship." In quoting these words I am not intentionally trying to beg the question at issue; rather am I presenting an interpretation of the assertion of Jesus which seems to be the only one possible. It is useless for unbelief to question the authenticity of this particular claim; similar claims are made in other places, and the whole of our Lord's public ministry is based upon the principle of God-consciousness

of which Matthew 11:27 is but a vivid instance.

The same truth is seen in some of the titles which He assumed. The term "Son of man" is undoubtedly associated with the Messianic status, but the more arresting term "Son of God" has a far wider import. It is admitted that in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus does not definitely appropriate this title, but He frequently calls God His Father. The difference is one of form rather than fact. In the Fourth Gospel He assumes the title with frequency. The Sonship of Jesus differed essentially from the filial relation to God which we are all summoned to honour. The term is always safeguarded from common usage and is employed in an exclusive sense. We are called to be sons; He was The Son. "Candid Unitarians have admitted that it is a striking fact that while Jesus often speaks of God as *the* Father, *My* Father, *Your* Father, He never associates Himself even with His disciples to say *Our* Father."¹⁹ This is vastly more than a quibble. It marks a solemn reservation of title on the part of our Lord. That reservation was really the assertion of a unique and unshared relation

¹⁹ "Studies in Theology," Jas. Denney, D. D., p. 33.

with the Father. It means that He is to God what no mortal man, no matter how sincere and saintly, can ever be.

Closely associated with this title is His claim to preëxistence. Here we approach one of the most difficult of all the problems presented in the Person of our Lord. It were sheer folly to ignore these difficulties, or lightly to brush them aside. But our immediate task is not to explain the *how*, but to ascertain the *what*. Is preëxistence predicated of Jesus, not only in the Epistles, but in the Gospels? The question admits of but one answer. From end to end of the Gospel narratives the presence of Jesus in this world is regarded as the expression of a purpose of grace. He "came." He "was sent." He was "from above." He "descended out of Heaven." In this sweeping statement "before Abraham was, I am," His timeless being is asserted in the most dramatic form.

His claims to unique sonship and preëxistence go together. They seem to be inseparable. They lift our thought into the Infinite spaces and the Eternal realities. There cannot be an Eternal Father apart from an Eternal Son. Apparently the very nature of God is social

rather than solitary. May this not represent an Eternal necessity? Could God be conscious of Himself as an unrelieved unit of Eternal spiritual Being? Let imagination wing its way to those immeasurable distances antedating worlds, systems, angels, archangels and seraphim when God alone was. Could the Infinite Being be conscious of Himself if Godhead were absolutely solitary? Just as we could never be conscious of colour if everything were of one colour only, so the Father eternally knows Himself to be Father because eternally He knows another to be Son. Eternal Fatherhood and Eternal Sonship are correlatives of thought itself.

And because of this principle of God-consciousness in Jesus we are prepared to accept His claim to be the Final Judge of men. Granting His previous claims this one is inevitable. Judgment is integral in any moral system of things. Law without sanctions ceases to be Law. And sanctions cease to be sanctions when not justly and adequately enforced. When sanctions are unjustly administered we have tyranny; when inadequately enforced, we have chaos. The all-holy person of Jesus safeguards the moral government of

the world from both of these extremes. Surely no other historic character ever dreamed of asserting this claim of universal judgeship. For any one else to climb to the throne of universal judgeship, there to pronounce the final sentence upon all men, would appear so grotesque that the laughter of the whole world would be almost certain. Think of the perfect knowledge of all the motives, the desires, the conditions of every soul which such a Judge must possess. Yet, when Jesus in His parables of Judgment quietly asserts: "When the Son of man shall come . . . and before him shall be gathered all nations," we are conscious of no violation of the fitness of things; not a single spiritual instinct resents the picture; inwardly we feel that if men are to be judged, He alone is competent to preside at the tribunal; and reverently, with bowed heads and solemn submission we say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

A God-consciousness! It will be found that the most consistent and rational course to take with Jesus is to accept Him upon His own estimate of Himself.

Was He not worthy to be God's Son? If a self-disclosure of God, in personal form, is

in itself possible, why should the most cautious thinker hesitate to accept Jesus as such? Can we portray any character intelligible to human thought, and approachable by human need, more worthy to be called God's Son? Across unmeasured distances the apostle on Patmos hears the ascription of adoration to the Lamb upon the Throne, "Thou art worthy." In presenting Jesus as the greatest Credential of Faith, the Christian religion stakes everything upon the affirmation "Thou art worthy, O Lord."

If unbelief admits the possibility of an Incarnation, but is unwilling to accept Jesus as the Incarnate One, it must, to be consistent, point out in what respect Jesus was unworthy, and it must place before our vision the portrait of one more gracious, more winsome, more compelling,—one before whom even Jesus Himself must be commanded to bow! That is the task of unbelief.

IV

THE DIVINE ELEMENT IN CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

THE word *Divine* is used in this connection with some hesitation. Was Tennyson on firm ground when he wrote in the later "Locksley Hall": "Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is divine"? When human nature reaches its highest unfoldings, what is its relation to Divine nature? Doubtless there is a kinship between the two. The qualities of goodness, compassion, and truth are one, whether found in God or man. In Him they exist in higher form. In Him they are embodied in infinite perfection. The difference between goodness in man and goodness in God is not in kind but in degree. Something of this truth of kinship as it subsists between God and man is involved in the teaching of Divine Fatherhood and human sonship. We could never enter into such sonship if our nature were essentially alien from the nature of God.

But granting the existence of this kinship between the two natures, it were folly to ignore the still more obvious truth that man is not God, and God is not man. There are certain things which seem to be part of ourselves which we can never predicate of God. The child in its cradle has a nature akin to the strong man who fulfills the functions of fatherhood, but there are certain things which the father can do, and which the child cannot do. It were foolish affectation to balk at the distinction which exists in practical matters between parent and child.

When we speak of the Divine elements embodied in Christian origins, we refer to those phases of Christian experience and to those developments of the early Church which, we firmly believe, can never be accounted for by man's unaided thought or effort. Faith has the right to demand from unbelief one condition, viz., an open mind. If men come to the field of Christian origins with their minds hermetically sealed against all facts which cannot be cribbed, cabined and confined within the categories of the usual, then all the honest efforts of Faith to prove its case will be useless. Violent prejudice against the supernatural

must be calmly laid aside. Who knows the limits of the natural? As Dr. Romanes well asks, "Is there never to be room in this world for the unusual or the exceptional?"

First in order let us glance at this Christian Credential as it stands related to the alleged

RESURRECTION OF JESUS

The Christian documents and the Christian tradition declare that Jesus arose from the dead in less than forty-eight hours after His crucifixion. The claim is asserted in the firmest and most unfaltering terms. It is not easy to say which of the evangelists tells the story in the most convincing way. The narrative is present, either in actual statement or by implication, on nearly every page of the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. The Apocalypse glows and burns with the glory of the One who declared, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore."

It is obvious that if this narrative be accepted, the claims of Faith are conceded. In such an event unbelief would have nothing further to say. The case would be closed. No effort is needed to show that the Resurrection of Jesus would validate all His claims, and

would place His spiritual authority beyond doubt or question. Had Jesus been a deceiver, or a self-deceived enthusiast, there could have been no resurrection. Such a character could never have raised Himself, and the idea of God working a miracle to raise Him would lie far beyond the range of serious thought. The type of unbelief with which Faith contends in these days is the type which assumes, and frequently with rather violent dogmatism, that outside the realm of matter we have no shadow of evidence that reality is to be found. If Jesus was raised from the dead the whole system of modern materialism is discredited, if not shattered.

Now one thing is certain, and is probably admitted by all thinkers except those who deny the historic life of Jesus, namely, the tremendous part played in early Christian history by the *belief* in the Resurrection. Few German thinkers took more violent liberties with the Christian documents than did Ferdinand Baur, but he frankly admitted that the belief in the resurrection of Jesus was the great driving force in the early Christian Church, and that apart from that belief Christianity could never have commenced its world-wide mission.

Strauss virtually admitted the same thing. In recent years few men have brought to this subject a greater wealth of scholarship, or a more pronounced hostility to the Gospel narrative than has Schmiedel. His admission is significant: "It is undeniable that the Church was founded, not directly upon the fact of the resurrection of Jesus, but upon the belief in His resurrection; and this faith worked with equal power whether the resurrection was an actual fact or not."¹ The more dogmatic the latter part of the sentence, the more imperative it is for this distinguished critic to account for the origin of the belief.

Christianity *is!* What started it? It had little or nothing in the way of wealth or material resource. It had no friends at court. It had no military power or propaganda. Its early adherents were admittedly men and women of little social influence. Its teachings cut against the grain of human preference, desire and habit. It called men to a life of renunciation and service. It found no place within its fellowship for the cruelties and the immoralities that marked many of the amusements of the day. It provoked the hatred of

¹ "Encyclopædia Biblica," Vol. 4, p. 4086.

the Jew, the scorn of the Greek, and the mailed fist of the Roman. It had nothing in its resources which would have warranted its leaders in bidding for popularity, even had they been tempted in that direction. What started the movement? Practically all thinkers, whether believers or sceptics, agree that it was belief in the resurrection of Jesus which furnished the impelling power.

Here, however, the two sets of thinkers divide. Sceptics say, "People have often found wonderful energy in a mistaken belief, so it is reasonable to assume that the disciples and their friends were entirely mistaken,—their wonderful belief having no foundation in fact, although it furnished them with a great emotional dynamic."

I have tried to state the attitude of modern unbelief with scrupulous fairness.

It will be seen at a glance that this attitude of scepticism does not impeach the honour or the integrity of the early Christian community. There was a period when unbelief charged Jesus, or His friends, or both, with downright falsehood. It did not hesitate to denounce the resurrection story as sheer fabrication. A German scholar of the eighteenth century

named Reimarus took this position. He was the impassioned exponent of natural religion, and the savage opponent, not only of Christianity, but of the very idea of a revealed religion. When he confronted the New Testament statement of the Resurrection, he did not hesitate to describe it as the product of collusion and fraud. It is a significant fact that no school of modern thought cares to be associated with such a view.

The explanation based on falsehood is therefore ruled out by a practically unanimous verdict. How then did the belief in the Resurrection originate?

It has been suggested that Jesus *never really died*. This peculiar theory makes much of the admitted fact that crucifixion is a slow and lingering death; that a victim might lie for several hours on the cross, and if removed in a condition of unconsciousness induced by exhaustion, might revive after careful ministrations. It is doubtful if this theory, which embodies improbability enough to be considered as practically impossible, has any very strenuous school of defenders to-day. It has to dispose of these facts, (1) that all the evangelists pronounced Him dead; (2) that the Roman

soldier, according to the Fourth Gospel, made the assurance of His death doubly sure by his well-aimed spear thrust into the heart; (3) that the executioners, trained Roman soldiers, believed Him dead, and were, perhaps, of all men the least likely to be deceived; (4) that, in any case, the greatest problem of all remains, viz., the disposition of the body of the Crucified! According to the "swoon" theory, what became of that body? Jesus had too many shrewd, competent and implacable enemies to permit His friends to carry His exhausted body away where it could be nursed back to life; (5) and no less a critic than Strauss has shown how utterly absurd is the notion that the sight of such an emaciated sufferer who had never died could create in the disciples the assurance of the Resurrection triumph. A theory which disgusts a sceptical thinker like Strauss, who was only too anxious to find a naturalistic explanation of the Resurrection story, may safely be laid aside as unworthy of serious discussion.

We now come to the theory of *Hallucination*. It runs somewhat as follows: The death of Jesus was a terrible blow to His disciples;

they could not endure the thought that their beloved Master should pass forever under the dominion of death; they became nervous, high strung, and emotionally restive; they worked themselves up to an abnormal stage of excitement; finally they *thought* they saw Him, their thoughts being inspired by their wishes, and, *thinking* they saw Him they were swept forward upon the tide of a great spiritual dynamic; they preached "the Gospel of the Resurrection."

This is the explanation which is generally favoured by unbelief, doubtless because it seems to cover the situation most effectively.

I believe there never was an explanation of a difficult situation so utterly flimsy, so arbitrary or so futile. First, it does violence to the obvious facts concerning the mental condition of the apostles and their friends. It is admitted that there is such a thing as hallucination. Every alienist of standing will vouch for this. If the story of the resurrection had been put forward by some one person, this hallucination theory might have carried weight. But can we possibly indulge the thought that a group of persons, whose conduct had previously been marked by common sense and average mental

poise should, all at once, induce within themselves such an abnormal mental condition as to border upon insanity? In Webster's New International Dictionary we have a definition of the word "hallucination" in which it is described as a condition "usually arising from disorder of the nervous system, as in delirium tremens."

There were ten separate appearances of Jesus to His followers, one of these appearances being granted to an individual, Mary Magdalene, and another to a group of about five hundred persons. Can any responsible thinker argue that these separate groups of people, on ten different occasions, were all afflicted with hallucination, that this condition lasted for a period of forty days, and that, after this abnormal period, every one was suddenly and completely restored to normal conditions?

The hallucination theory has to presuppose a general mental and spiritual attitude of Christ's followers which is exactly the opposite of that which obtained. Renan has exploited this theory as adroitly as any one, and he is compelled to describe the attitude of Mary Magdalene and indeed the whole Christian

community as one of expectation. They not only hoped, but *expected*, that Jesus would arise, according to Renan. It is as though this curious French critic had said, "If people go looking for ghosts, of course they will find them; the wish is father to the thought." Now that is precisely the mood which the early Christian believers did *not* indulge. What took Mary to the sepulchre? She went there, with her Christian sisters, carrying spices "that . . . they might anoint him" (Mark 16: 1). They expected to fulfill the last offices of love over a dead body. When the news of the resurrection was told to part or the whole of the apostles' group, what was the first reaction? They "*believed not*" (Mark 16: 2). When the two disciples met the Master on the way to Emmaus on the evening of the third day, their mental attitude can be gauged by their sorrowful confession (Luke 24: 21). They said, "But we trusted." In the light of their sorrowful demeanour as stated in verse 17, we can understand their feeling. It was as though they said, "All along we had hoped and believed that He would be the one to redeem Israel, but alas!" After their wonderful experience with the

Stranger and their unwavering conviction of His victory over death, they reported their discovery to their colleagues. With what result? "Neither believed they them" (Mark 16: 13). Perhaps the most striking evidence of this attitude of unbelief on the part of the apostles is found in the report made to them by the group of women who returned from the vanquished tomb: "and their words seemed to them (the apostles) as idle tales, and they believed them not" (Luke 24: 11). Idle tales! Yet it is men who take this attitude of scepticism toward the event who are charged by Renan with cultivating such feverish expectation that by a curious psychological process, that expectation became evidence. When, according to Luke's narrative, the Risen Lord actually stood before them and revealed to them His wounds, their attitude was "they believed not for joy" (Luke 24: 41). They believed, of course, but they believed in spite of themselves. It was as though they said to each other, "Is not this too good to be true? Are we not in danger of waking up to find that it has all been a wonderful dream?" If we are to be guided by all the facts of the case there can be no escape from the conclusion that the

apostles had not a particle of hope or an atom of expectation that they would ever see the face of their Master again.

The case of Thomas is still more definite. He declared in effect that no power on earth would ever be able to convince him of the truth of the narrative, apart from physical test. He must actually see the wounds upon the Master's body, put his fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into the wounded side. His words simply stated, in somewhat blunt and logical form, the general mood of scepticism toward the resurrection which at first dominated the entire Christian community. If we are to build theories out of facts and not use theories to ride roughshod over historical incidents, the Vision Theory, as elaborated by Renan, Strauss and others, and based on a theory of self-hypnosis, utterly crumbles. By no method of honourable intellectual procedure can it be made to fit the facts. Professor Bruce, who ranks among our greatest Christian apologists, writes, "The disciples were in so depressed a state of mind that subjective visions were the last thing in the world likely to befall them."²

²"Apologetics," A. B. Bruce, D. D., p. 390.

Another insuperable difficulty met by the "vision theory" is the time element in the narrative, and the fact that the period of appearances was so brief. By the western method of measuring time, it was less than two days from the period of the crucifixion until the first appearance of the risen Saviour. In this statement all the writers concur. Obviously there was no time for an indefinite number of people to work themselves up to such a pitch of mental disturbance as to make hallucination possible. Almost before the first shock of sorrow caused by Christ's death had passed, the news of His victory was announced. And the fact that this period of appearances extended to about forty days only, and then suddenly and entirely ceased, is a phase of the question fatal to the theory at issue. Hundreds of people do not suddenly and simultaneously become the victims of hallucination, and then, almost at a given moment, suddenly and simultaneously recover their mental and emotional equilibrium.

The Theory is Hopeless.

There is another explanation, with which the name of Keim is closely associated.

Speaking of his work "Jesus of Nazara," Professor Peake says, "It is the noblest of all the rationalistic Lives of Jesus, if indeed 'rationalistic' be not too unjust an epithet."³ When Keim comes to the story of the resurrection he tries to interpret it by a spiritualistic method. He admits the reality of Christ's death, and just as readily grants that the disciples actually saw something which was objective to their consciousness. What they saw, according to Keim, was the glorified Spirit of Jesus. After the crucifixion the personality of Jesus continued to live, but it lived as pure spirit without a return to the body. God graciously sent this spirit of the Master to comfort and inspire His followers, and to assure them of life eternal. And so the spirit of Jesus was seen by His disciples as an objective reality, and this "telegram from heaven" opened the way for the all-conquering Gospel.

If I were a confirmed unbeliever, hitherto convinced of the unreality of the New Testament story, I should be utterly unable to find any relief in Keim's modification of the narrative, as long as I remained wedded to nat-

³ "The Bible," by Dr. A. S. Peake, p. 321.

uralism. To me it would involve a supernatural element just as surely as would the orthodox statement. In order to accept it I should be compelled to concede the reality of a spiritual world into which the person of the Crucified passed at His death, or out of which He flashed His messages of hope and courage upon the perplexed minds and wounded hearts of His followers. For, according to this theory, the person of Jesus would not be lying in the sepulchre, it would exist in the form of a disembodied spirit. The explanation would be just as difficult of acceptance to a consistent materialist as the traditional narrative. And it would have this additional disadvantage, that it would be in conflict with the recorded facts. It makes no attempt to solve the problem of the empty grave. It is immeasurably harder to reconcile with the incident of Thomas, and the physical test that was offered him.

Keim's telegram theory is not extensively held, and it is doubtful if it ever will be.

There is one additional form of unbelief in the resurrection of Jesus to which reference must be made. It is the attitude of disregard.

Its basis is non-acceptance of the event, followed by inability or unwillingness to give the question any serious thought. Put into words it may be stated as follows: "Of course there was no actual resurrection. There *could* not have been. Possibly no one knows *how* the belief originated. The human mind has all sorts of queer ways in reaching certain conclusions. How this particular enthusiasm originated is a matter lying beyond our ken, and we dismiss it from our mental efforts." It is ignored. Like the baffled boy before the Chinese puzzle, they say, "We give it up." That this is the attitude frequently assumed is a matter of evidence. We say nothing at this time about the intellectual cowardice involved. Christianity is the biggest and most potent fact in our world. The belief in the resurrection of Jesus was the driving energy of original Christianity. Responsible thinkers cannot very well "give up" all serious attempts to account for this historical situation and yet retain the respect which thinkers covet. It is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to argue with any man while he is in this mood. An argument assumes a certain element of moral earnestness. Truth exacts

search and persistent effort on the part of every man who desires her comradeship. She imparts no light to those whose minds are sealed by prejudice, or who can only bring to her high tasks an easy-going and dilettante temper. The attitude of mere disregard of the Evangelical position is altogether too common. It is more dangerous than open and pronounced hostility. A rather strenuous denial of some Christian doctrine implies some measure of moral fervour.

A great many people, however, are too unconcerned to deny—they cannot be bothered. In these days they voice the mood of the ancient Athenians who, with a touch of playful irony, replied to St. Paul's impassioned appeal with these words, "We will hear thee again of this matter." It was as though they had said, "Some day, when we have nothing else to do, when time hangs heavily on our hands, when we would welcome a little intellectual diversion, anything, indeed, in the way of a mental or emotional fillip—some day we will hear thee again on this matter." The problem of the resurrection can never be solved in any such a cynical or listless temper. Only those who seek shall find. If truth is

not worth unprejudiced study and impassioned search it is worth nothing. In the name of intellectual self-respect Christian Faith has a right to demand from those who reject this great truth a consistent and rational explanation of the immediate and marvellous genesis of belief in it on the part of the early Christian community. There must be no attitude of "I give it up!" There must be no intellectual side-stepping. There must be no evasion. The issues are immeasurable. They stretch out to the Infinite itself. Enough has already been written to show that every school of thought in seeking to explain the situation upon a basis of naturalism involves itself in a breakdown, or becomes entangled in a series of suggestions more difficult of acceptance than the orthodox doctrine itself. This is a significant fact.

There is one line of thought bearing on the question which applies to those who strenuously deny the narrative as well as to those who dismiss it as an unexplained affair. Indeed the argument in question is addressed to every one who admits the historic life of Jesus, and His death on the Cross. With those who are unwilling to grant these two admissions

it is obvious that no form of discussion is even possible.

Here then we start with the irreducible minimum of admitted historical truth. Jesus lived and died. He was sentenced to crucifixion by the authority of Pontius Pilate to placate the clamouring, howling Jewish populace. The doubter must concede this claim.

What became of His body? It went *somewhere*. Believers and unbelievers admit this much. Are we claiming too much when we assert that practically all intelligent thinkers admit that it was placed in the sepulchre and surrounded by an armed Roman guard? Up to this point nearly all serious students are in substantial agreement. After the body had been placed in the sepulchre and surrounded by a company of Roman soldiers—then what? Up to this stage the enemies of Jesus had shown cunning of the highest order. They had revealed a resourcefulness of intrigue and a relentlessness of temper before which we marvel. The worthiest traditions of the Sanhedrin had been set aside; the Roman Governor had been skillfully browbeaten and coerced into a repugnant position; the populace had been craftily excited; the whole

tragedy had been staged with extraordinary skill. Is it even remotely possible that such masterly cunning linked to such implacable enmity would have lapsed into carelessness at the last? His foes recalled expressions which Jesus had used concerning His "rising again." Probably not one of them believed in the possibility of such a thing, but the whole narrative proves that they did think that, if the disciples could secure possession of the body, they might spread a report that He *had* risen again. In face of their admitted enmity, and the skill with which they had conducted their intrigues, can any one seriously doubt the truth of that part of the narrative which describes their action in appealing for the attendance of a Roman guard at the sepulchre? Will not every unbiased thinker admit that it was overwhelmingly probable that some such step should be taken?

We now reach the stage where we see the body of the Crucified laid in the sepulchre with an armed guard of Roman soldiers stationed close to the spot!

What happened next? Either the body of Jesus was taken away from the sepulchre; or

it remained there, to pass through the progressive stages of putrefaction; or—*Jesus arose!*

Can imagination itself portray any other procedure? Was it even possible for events to have assumed any other order of development? Let us look at the first possibility. The body of Jesus might have been removed. By whom? If it was removed it could only have been done by Christ's enemies or His friends. Now the enemies of Jesus would have no possible motive for removing the body—indeed, they would have every possible motive for confining it in the grave. It was to guarantee its permanent retention there that Caiaphas and his colleagues requested a military guard. For an enemy of Jesus to remove the body, or to cause it to be removed, would be an act stultifying the whole order of procedure on the part of the group to which he belonged. It would be to open the way for the declaration of the "empty grave" which every instinct of Jewish enmity would dread. This phase of the first alternative may be regarded as ruled out by universal consent.

Did the friends of Jesus remove the body? How could they? They were only a handful of people with no social influence! No scheme

of theirs could possibly cope with the iron discipline of a Roman guard. To imagine that a few heart-broken men and women, too dazed to think, too stunned to act, could literally break through an armed Roman guard and capture the body of their Lord, is to ask more than human credulity can grant, and even if this had been possible, how could the sight of the dead body of their Lord furnish them with the spiritual dynamic required? Everything goes to prove that the death of Jesus left His followers in the last stages of helplessness and hopelessness. Their prospects had perished; their hearts were broken; their morale was shattered. Something happened which suddenly and completely changed these men from dejection to immeasurable energy, from a group of cowed and crushed souls to the mighty conquerors of an evil world. Cheerfully they faced hunger and thirst, taunts and sneers, cursings and revilings, the stonings of the Jews, and the rods of the Roman lictors; joyously they met the ordeals of martyrdom. Does any sane thinker dare to assert that they found their inspiration for such experiences in the successful theft of the dead body of their Lord, even if such a theft had been possible?

There are some things harder to believe than miracles, and this is one.

That the body of Jesus was removed from the grave, notwithstanding the presence of an armed Roman guard placed there with definite instructions to frustrate any such an attempt, is a proposition which the human mind simply cannot accept. It borders upon the impossible, and even had it been done, it would utterly fail to account for those marvellous spiritual experiences which only belief in Christ's actual resurrection could furnish.

We proceed to consider the next explanation. Did the body of Jesus remain in the grave, to pass through the progressive stages of putrefaction? This is the view generally accepted by unbelief. So Matthew Arnold dolefully sings:

*But He is dead, and there He lies
In that lorn Syrian town;
And on His grave with shining eyes,
The Syrian stars look down.*

Let us see what this position involves. There cannot be the slightest doubt that within a few weeks after the death of Jesus there was a wonderful renaissance of faith in

Him. His scattered followers came together. They became bound to each other by the strongest and most sacred ties. Their mood changed from depression to exultation, from sorrow to joy, from weakness to all-conquering strength. Immediately afterward the leaders of the movement began to preach. Their pronouncements were clear, positive and unflinching. The assertion of the resurrection of their Lord lay at the very centre of their message. The first thing they did was to elect a colleague to fill the place vacated by Judas, in order that the one so elected "might be a witness with us of his resurrection."⁴ In his sermon on the day of Pentecost Peter makes the resurrection the goal and climax of his impassioned challenge, "Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be holden of it."⁵ In almost identical words the same leader advised the astonished crowd as it gathered round the man who had been healed of his lameness, "Ye . . . killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead."⁶ When summoned before the Council to answer for their conduct, Peter again hurls

⁴ Acts 1:22.⁵ Acts 2:24.⁶ Acts 3:15.

forth the same truth in almost exactly the same words, "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead."⁷ In a later part of the same chapter the assertion of Christ's resurrection is revealed as the central, vital and burning theme of the Apostolic message, "With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."⁸ In his address before the household of Cornelius Peter asserts the same truth, and makes it the basis of the evangelical Gospel: "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly."⁹ Through his long career as the great outstanding herald of the new faith St. Paul never swerved from the position he took in his first recorded sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, "They took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people."¹⁰

Enough has been written to justify the assertion, an assertion generally accepted, that the affirmation of Christ's resurrection was the

⁷ Acts 4: 10.

⁹ Acts 10: 40.

⁸ Acts 4: 33.

¹⁰ Acts 13: 29-31.

one outstanding and continuous theme of Apostolic preaching. It is almost impossible to believe that there ever could have been any Apostolic preaching of any kind without it.

This preaching made a profound impression. Vast multitudes were compelled to think. The conscience of the people was reached. Deep emotions were aroused. Thousands accepted fellowship with the Christian group, and gladly announced themselves as followers of the Crucified. So great was the impression made by the preaching of the resurrection that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."¹¹ This brief statement is stamped with immense significance, "A great company of the priests," the representatives of the class who took the most prominent part in the persecution and death of Jesus, now openly announce their adherence to the cause of the Crucified. They rank among the converts to that Faith which finds its central truth and its impelling force in the resurrection of Jesus.

Does unbelief accept this statement of historical facts? If this was not the way in which early Christianity arose to influence and power, how *did* it originate? Where does

¹¹ Acts 6:7.

legend cease and valid history begin? Were Justin Martyr and Polycarp and Ignatius of Antioch historical persons? Doubtless. Were the commanding Christian figures of the generation preceding them also historical realities, or myths, namely, the Apostle John, Timothy, Peter, Paul? They must have been historical figures because upon no other assumption can the origin of Christianity be accounted for.

Where does the argument now stand? We see a handful of despised men and women transformed into a mighty and conquering company, thrilled, inspired and energized by the assurance of the resurrection. We see them presenting this truth with such overwhelming conviction that thousands share their faith, while among these thousands we may note "a great company of the priests." We see the authorities of Jerusalem perplexed, baffled, and driven to their wits' ends, saying, "What shall we do to these men?" And yet, on the theory of unbelief, the body of Jesus was lying in the grave, passing through the various stages of putrefaction.

"*What shall we do?*" There was one thing that Caiaphas and his colleagues could have done, and could have done easily and quickly.

They could have issued a statement to the public. They could have said, "This heresy which gathers around the name of the Crucified has no foundation in fact. There was no resurrection. You are the victims of foolish error. The body of Jesus lies in the tomb where it was laid. If this is doubted, come with the members of the Sanhedrin at such and such a time; the stone shall be removed and the body exhumed, or at least exposed to view. Seeing is believing. Let there be an end forever to a heresy based upon a series of false and foolish assertions."

If the body of Jesus was lying in the grave as this theory postulates, is it not as certain as anything unproved can be that Caiaphas and his colleagues would have taken this course? How could they have failed to take it? The question at issue was a question of fact. The impassioned preaching of Peter and his brethren could have been silenced forever had a deputation of Jewish citizens been summoned to the sepulchre to verify the statements of Caiaphas, and if—if—the body had been there. That Caiaphas and his comrades made no such overture is another and final proof that the body was *not* there. Then

where was it? There is only one possible answer. We are face to face with the inmost truth of the Christian Gospel. Standing in reverent thought beside that grave we can almost hear the angel's message, "He is not here, HE IS RISEN."

We admit differences and discrepancies in the narratives. Do such discrepancies constitute a valid prejudice against them? Suppose the four narratives had been identical in form and almost identical in language! In that case the close resemblance might have created misgivings. Unbelief could have said, "This looks suspicious; as a rule witnesses do not give their evidence in exactly similar form unless some element of collusion is involved." Not long ago a fire broke out in an important public building, doing considerable damage. Two witnesses testified concerning the event. There was considerable conflict in their statements. One said the fire started at ten o'clock in the evening, the other said eleven o'clock. One witness was speaking of standard time, and the other of daylight-saving time. There was marked verbal conflict, yet both statements were truthful. One said that a strong wind fanned the flames, the other said very little

wind was stirring. The one witness observed the fire from the exposed side of the building, the other stood on the sheltered side. Again there was discrepancy of statement, yet truthful testimony from both witnesses. Given a few more statements such as these, and it would be easy for a mind that merely runs to analysis and hair-splitting criticism to prove, to its own satisfaction, that no such building had been destroyed by fire at all. But it had. One need only read the article on the Resurrection by Dr. Schmiedel in the "Encyclopædia Biblica" to see this type of mind at work. After an impartial study of the document one is left with the all-compelling feeling that the writer started out with a dogmatic prejudgment. His mind was definitely made up that there was no resurrection, and all his exhaustive analysis is brought in to demonstrate his negative assumption. His conclusion is reached long before his study begins. As against this purely negative mental attitude in the presence of which probably *no* proofs would be convincing, one may place the utterance of a former Lord Chief Justice of England, a man whose business it was to study evidence as an expert. He declared that the Resurrection of Jesus was

attested by proofs as final and determining as any that had ever entered into the settlement of any great case in a British court.

Without surrendering to the spirit of impatience provoked by such a writer as Schmiedel, one is forced to the conclusion that he is not so much swayed by the evidence as by some assumption and predetermination lying behind the proofs, or any possible proofs. We are therefore compelled to leave the evidence, and meet this scholarly critic on the remoter field of philosophy. There is just one challenge which he and his colleagues must answer: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?"¹² *Why?* The thing resolves itself into our fundamental conception of God! Is God free? In the presence of some tremendous moral need or issue, has the Almighty any liberty of action? If He has not, then the time spent on a study of the evidences of the Christian Gospel is a total waste! If God is free to act in the premises, then we assert that the proofs presented are adequate.

"*Incredible.*" Probably Plato had the greatest mind of the ancient civilization. In

¹² Acts 26:8.

any case we may say there were few greater. Suppose it were possible for that great Greek thinker to visit our modern life for one day. We may imagine him sitting in the room where these lines are written. We have scarcely greeted each other when we both hear the ringing of a small bell. I lift my telephone toward me, take down the receiver, and talk down a tube. This conversation is continued for two minutes. I then utter the usual "Good-bye," hang up the receiver, and look into the puzzled face of the great sage. He inquires if I have actually conversed with another person, and when I have assured him of the fact he asks if that person is in the room below the table, or in the adjoining room. Imagine his amazement when I tell him that I have been talking to my son, who is nearly three hundred miles away! Would it not seem incredible to him? When we conduct a conversation across hundreds of miles of space we are not in the realm of the supernatural, yet to Plato the whole affair would be as wonderful as though we were. The simple fact is that we do not know the limits of the natural. It may well be that the sharp antithesis between the natural and the supernatural must be modified, and we

shall yet discover that the supernatural is but the extension of the natural. The most timid souls need not fear that this will involve us in Pantheism. In any case the age in which we live does not favour the attitude of the critic who starts out with the assumption that the resurrection of Jesus is incredible, and therefore no body of evidence can justify its wholehearted acceptance.

The author of "Painted Windows" tells this story: "One day when he was deep in his studies of radiant matter, Sir William Crookes touched a little table which stood between our two chairs and said to me, 'We shall announce to the world in a year or two, perhaps sooner, that the atoms of which this table is composed are made up of tiny charges of electricity, and we shall prove that each one of those tiny electrons, relative to its size, is farther away from its nearest neighbour than our earth is from the nearest star.' I have lived to see this prophecy fulfilled, though its implications are not yet understood."

Living in an age when such marvels are revealed to us, it is strange to see scholars of ability take a position which, if reduced to frank confession, would mean, "No matter

what the evidence may be, the resurrection of Jesus is incredible." To such we can only reply in the words of Paul, "*Why* should it be thought incredible?" Why? The burden is upon the one who denies.

It is irritating enough when this attitude is taken by some loose thinkers, but much more annoying when scientists assume a like position. Scientists ought to know better: they *do* know better. In some instances Science not only needs to be more religious, it needs to be more *scientific*.

The Divine factor in Christian origins does not end with this great event. We have to face another fact:

THE CONTINUED ACTIVITY OF JESUS

Granted the historic resurrection, this is exactly what might be expected. The Personality of Jesus continued. Could it continue without coming in contact with the cause He had founded, and the community that acclaimed Him Lord? The next great event in the life of the Christian community was Pentecost. Again something marvellous happened. By some special visitation of Divine power,

the followers of Jesus were prepared to commence a campaign against a Christless world. Apparently the apostles had a Gospel to preach apart from the Divine visitation of Pentecost; the latter furnished them with the requisite power and passion. In some way, which perhaps we shall never be able to explain, it marked the coming of the presence and power of Christ into His own Church. It was His Holy Spirit which baptized the Church. Professor Bruce begins one of the chapters of his Christian apologetics with these words, "Jesus has for the Christian consciousness the religious value of God." "He is the *Lord Jesus*, and as such the object of devoted attachment and reverent worship."¹³ Could He have for us "the religious value of God" if the resurrection had marked the termination of His contact with His Church? Nearly two thousand years have passed away: if the resurrection had not been followed by other direct personal activities on His part, would He not have become to us merely a tender and beautiful memory? His life was gracious and appealing beyond compare. His resurrection validated His claims and stamped His per-

¹³ "Apologetics," A. B. Bruce, D. D., p. 398.

sonality with supreme spiritual authority. Would this have been enough?

Dr. Mackintosh writes, "Wendt, who holds no brief for orthodoxy, has said truly that faith in Christ risen involves these four definite propositions: first, He lives really, not in the memory of disciples only; second, He lives personally, not as an entity now resolved into its ultimate constituents; third, He lives in Heaven, not in the region of the dead; finally, He lives in the fullest possession of blessedness and power." Then the author proceeds, "An impressive type of religion may no doubt subsist on less than this, but the typically Christian mind has always felt that for the triumphal discharge of her mission to humanity the Church depends on the real presence of her Lord, gracious, omnipotent, eternal. Faith's object must be now and here. Past incidents may be crammed with meaning for on-lookers, but unless they point to a reality which does not pass, and with which we can have immediate . . . relations, they have no more importance for the modern mind than the notes of a bank long since extinct."¹⁴ This

¹⁴ "The Person of Jesus Christ," H. R. Mackintosh, D. D., pp. 364, 365.

quotation goes to the roots of New Testament doctrine and life, and it is abundantly sustained by centuries of Christian experience. As surely as our Lord predicted for Himself victory over death, so surely did He pledge His spiritual presence to His people to the end of the ages (Matt. 28: 20). Pentecost was the guarantee of the fulfillment of that pledge. He who once gave Himself *for* His people then gave Himself *to* His people. There quickly appeared the first forms of Christian worship. At first the early Christians worshipped with their fellow-countrymen, accepting the ministries of the temple and the synagogue. It was not long, however, before the inevitable lines of cleavage appeared, separating the Jew from the Christian. Devotion to their risen and glorified Lord brought believers into the closest and most sacred fellowship. They were dominated not only by the principle of personal devotion to Him, but by the sense of His presence. They sang hymns of praise to Him, and some fragments of these verses can be traced in the New Testament. Their prayers were directed to Him. The dying Stephen beholds Him face to face, and commits his spirit into His gracious keeping.

The Christian love-feasts and Communion services centred around His holy presence. The first day of the week which celebrated His resurrection became specifically the Holy Day of the Christian community, in lieu of the seventh day, marked by traditional Hebrew usage. Baptism was administered in the Triune Name which included His own, and the Apostolic benediction was similarly worded. Forgiveness and reconciliation were mediated by and realized in Him. With his unusual spiritual insight Dr. Mackintosh writes, "The faith conveyed by Jesus is no mere abstract truth separable from Himself, as the truth of the law of gravitation is separable from Newton. We are able to understand and use the laws of nature while totally ignorant of those to whose research and genius our knowledge of them is due, but the highest and purest faith in God can be attained in no way but one; it comes through a believing response to the person of Jesus Christ. It is what we see in Jesus that inspires a triumphant certainty of God."¹⁵ These words are certainly an accurate description of the faith and life mirrored on the pages

¹⁵ "The Person of Jesus Christ," H. R. Mackintosh, D. D., p. 346.

of the New Testament. All the blessings of the new Covenant were realized through Him. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁶ The teaching of the New Testament assumes that the power, unmeasured and immeasurable, by which Jesus was raised from the dead, abides forever, as the secret dynamic of Christian experience; "that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."¹⁷ In effect Paul means, "I pray that you may come to see more clearly the wonderful resources of Christian discipleship, for you must remember that the very power which raised Jesus from the dead has not ceased to exist; it is graciously directed toward us; it comes to us as the sunlight comes to the flowers, or the winds of heaven to the outspread sails of the ship, and by it we must conquer." And by it they did conquer. It was for His sake that they suffered. "We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake."¹⁸ "For

¹⁶ I Cor. 15: 57.¹⁷ Eph. 1: 19, 20.¹⁸ 2 Cor. 4: 11.

thy sake we are killed all the day long.”¹⁹ The early Christians did not face their daily tortures and martyrdoms for the sake of a dogma, or a ritual, or a code, or even a Church. It was for a person. And by the spiritual fellowship with that person they triumphed. Their achievements were not due to inherent willpower or stoical inflexibility. “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”²⁰ We cannot imagine how such lines as these would ever have been written if Jesus had been merely a beautiful memory or a gracious personality far removed from all possible contact with those who bore His name. “Jesus has for the Christian consciousness the religious value of God.” He certainly had that value for the early Church. By virtue of His continued contact with His people they met and challenged a Christless world. Everything was against them. That they could win against the combined forces of embittered Judaism, decadent Greek culture, and the cynical imperialism of Rome would have seemed at that time a wild and absurd proposition. It would have been laughed out of court. That they *won*, that in every great

¹⁹ Rom. 8:36.

²⁰ Rom. 8:37.

centre of the empire they raised the banner of the Cross, and in spite of ten fearful persecutions, placed a nominal adherent of their faith on the throne of Nero and Domitian, constitutes the greatest wonder of history. If unbelief is still determined to deny the resurrection of Jesus and refuses to admit His continued presence in His Church, it must explain this unique series of events. Its explanation must be reasonable, and must be rigidly kept within the realm of fact. In all the ranks of scepticism, who will be brave enough to essay the task?

The Divine element in the life of the early Church is vividly revealed in

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

Every true conversion is a Divine experience. It takes us into a realm where the masters of history, psychology and sociology throw up their hands. They find themselves dropping their plummets into unfathomable waters. If we make much of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus it is with no intention of belittling any other conversion. We emphasize this particular case because it is marked by special features which compel the attention of a sceptical mind.

Saul was a scholar, a thinker, a rabid and intense Jewish religionist, and an avowed enemy of the whole Christian movement. In studying this man we need have no fear concerning the safety of the historical ground on which we stand. Even so radical a thinker as Harnack refers to him as "the most luminous personality in the history of primitive Christianity."²¹ Dr. George Milligan truly says, "The day has happily gone by when the authenticity of by far the greater part of the Pauline Epistles can be seriously attacked";¹ therefore criticism can lodge no protest when we quote from his own writings.

Can imagination portray a character less likely to be impelled by natural taste and motive toward the Christian Faith? Every fibre of his being was arrayed against it. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, the champion of an ancient and newly-challenged system. He believed that a triumphant Christianity would spell the doom of Hebraism. He would tolerate no half-measures, and had only loathing for compromises. He was a "root and branch" man. Far more than Lord Strafford of the Stuart

²¹ "Religion and the Modern World," p. 233.

days did he deserve the title of "Thorough." It is almost certain that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, and from that place of power he hurled the full weight of his influence upon the side of the policy directed toward the extermination of the hated sect. This may be safely inferred from his confession before Agrippa: "When they were put to death I gave my voice (or vote) against them."²² On this verse Bishop Ellicott, a most cautious expositor, says, "He must have been a member either of the Sanhedrin itself, or of some tribunal with delegated authority." In either case all his official influence was linked to his personal animus in a merciless campaign against the early believers. In the same address before Agrippa he freely confessed the mood in which he followed up his work of persecution. He was "exceedingly mad against them" and "persecuted them even unto strange cities." His attitude was one of unreasoning and deadly hate. It was not enough that the believers were scattered before his crusade as the leaves are scattered by autumn's blast. He followed them up. No bloodhound on the scent was ever more per-

²² Acts 26: 10.

sistent or merciless in its hunt than was Saul. Armed with legal authority he set out for Damascus with a small group of associates impelled by a similar temper. It really seems as though the whole future of the Christian movement was then at stake. With the vast network of hostile power which Saul and his colleagues could control, the total destruction of the Christians was theoretically possible.

Was this movement to be annihilated in its infancy? If exceptional divine power was exercised to raise Jesus from the dead, why should it not be exercised to save the cause which He founded? Destinies wide as the world, and enduring as time itself, were hanging in the balance. Again something wonderful happened. Saul of Tarsus left Jerusalem a raging persecutor; he entered Damascus a few hours later as a humble Christian inquirer.

The story of his conversion is told three times in the Acts of the Apostles with only slight variations. The three narratives agree that his conversion was due to a direct and personal vision of Christ. He saw Him, heard Him speak, and even conversed with Him. Whatever may be the explanation advanced

by scepticism there can be no question of Paul's own version. Unless words are to be stripped of their obvious meaning St. Paul's assertions compel us to believe that, in his own judgment, he actually came into objective contact with the glorified person of Christ. Twice in his first Epistle to the Corinthians he claims that he had *seen* Christ. "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" "Last of all he was seen of me also."²³ Twice he declares that he "heard the voice." Subjective illusions are not accompanied by the voice of the one whose presence has no objective reality. Paul ought to be allowed to know something about his own conversion. Even King Agrippa granted him that privilege: "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself."²⁴ Surely the unbeliever of to-day ought to be as fair as was Agrippa.

If ever there was a great thinker who was essentially sane, free from fads, morbid emotions, habitual introspection, and odd fancies, it was St. Paul. All the vast and varied gifts of his intellect, his imagination and his affections were concentrated upon a cause. All the undivided currents of his being worked objectively. He travelled from city to city, from

²³ I Cor. 9:1.

²⁴ I Cor. 15:8.

village to village, from province to province, from continent to continent, declaring the Evangel, exposing the needs and bankruptcies of a pagan civilization, combating error, founding churches, ordaining officers, writing letters which have become immortal literature, and glorifying his Lord by the dedication of all his powers to Him.

To what part of St. Paul's life and labours can we turn in quest of the fantastic or the morbid? Why should unbelief assume that a man with such a healthy type of mind was radically mistaken concerning the greatest event in his own career? Is not such an attitude marked by impertinence? Every one must admit the fact of Paul's conversion. He was at one time a persecutor and a blasphemer; later he became an apostle and a martyr to the faith. Everybody must also admit that his conversion was sudden. What produced it? Obviously it was not brought about by some extraordinary sermon to which he listened; nor by some argument with an apostle; nor by some lengthy period of unprejudiced meditation and search. It is easy enough for unbelief to resort to such a phrase as "subjective illusion." Did his companions also suffer from

an illusion? Sharing the anti-Christian prejudices which he cherished before his conversion, they would have had every motive for impeaching his testimony and exposing him to Jewish ridicule, had not his experience been based upon an objective reality. Unbelief must explain how some freak of fancy could leave a man almost, if not totally, blind for several days. The admitted fact of his physical blindness is a tremendous confirmation of the truth of his own claim, "Last of all he was seen of me also." Through all the long years of his glorious apostleship Paul never withdrew that claim.

I have ventured to present the Divine elements in Christian origins as a valid, and I believe unanswerable, credential of the Christian Faith. If unbelief sweeps this credential aside as inadequate it must be consistent. The credential does not dwell in the region of abstract thought. It is not woven out of metaphysical threads. It is not an outgrowth of mysticism. It is rooted in historical facts. Unbelief must therefore account for the conviction of the resurrection; for the mighty spiritual phenomena evidenced by the early Church, and for the conversion of Saul of

Tarsus. In all the ranks of unbelief what man can be found who is willing to undertake the task?

About the middle of the eighteenth century two able and noted free-thinkers decided that the time had come to dispose of the Christian Faith. Both Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton agreed that the resurrection of Jesus and the conversion of St. Paul were two main foundations on which the Christian structure was built. Mr. West undertook the task of disproving the resurrection, and Lord Lyttleton agreed to prove that the alleged Divine element in the conversion of St. Paul had no basis in fact. Both men worked hard at their tasks. They were educated, literary, critical and fearless. As a result of their close and conscientious studies both men became convinced of the veracity of the records which they had undertaken to destroy, both became converts to the Christian Faith, and both became communicants of the Church. Dr. Johnson declared that Lord Lyttleton's subsequent work on the conversion of St. Paul was one "to which infidelity has never been able to furnish a specious answer."

It is easy to misunderstand and even pervert

the purpose of this chapter. The argument may be discounted by being made to appear as though it were based only upon a Divine presence found in gaps and chasms. The fact is if we can find God anywhere we have a very good chance of finding Him everywhere. These pages are specially addressed to those who admit that they cannot find a basis of faith *anywhere*. Our answer is that at least there is a Divine element here, and here, and here. With that rare combination of scholarship and spiritual insight which marks his works Dr. Cadman writes in reference to a type of religious teaching which is passing away: "The tokens of God's presence in His own world were too frequently found in those apparent breaches of His continuous administration which were magnified as miraculous."²⁵ It is not my intention to place myself where this valid criticism may fall upon me, but the distinguished writer would be among the first to admit that one of the surest ways of finding God's "continuous administration" is by the discovery of His unmistakable presence and power in the origins of Christianity. We find God everywhere by first finding Him somewhere.

²⁵ "Ambassadors of God," S. Parkes Cadman, D. D., p. 174.

V

THE TRUTH OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

A REMARKABLE story is told in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: There is every reason to believe that, with the crucifixion of Jesus, His enemies assumed that His cause was destroyed. His apostles had fled, and apparently the early community of Jesus had disbanded. Nothing seemed to be left as a nucleus around which the cause could rally. The Jewish authorities prided themselves upon their knowledge of public sentiment, and nothing could have induced them to believe that a crucified Nazarene could ever gain a following as the chosen Messiah. We can readily understand how Caiaphas and his colleagues congratulated themselves at the close of the first Good Friday. Everything seemed to be settled. Jesus had lost. The excitement would soon be over. Things would quickly return to normal type and usual experience. The vested interests of

the Sanhedrin would be entrenched more firmly than ever. Such must have been the thoughts of the Jewish leaders as the sun of that day was setting. What else could they think?

They were quickly undeceived. Within a few weeks the name of the Galilean received a new significance. There was a wonderful rallying of His former following. A few handfuls of apparently dead ashes were seen to leap into flames. Popular imagination was thrilled, and the springs of religious feeling were stirred. Signs and wonders were wrought in His name. In the course of a few hours three thousand Jews were baptized into the name of the One whom the Jewish Church had put to death as a blasphemer. Had such a fact been predicted on the day of the crucifixion it would have been greeted by the foremost enemies of Jesus with utter derision. The shrewdest member of the Sanhedrin was now unable to forecast the development of events. Anything might happen. In any event further conflict was certain. Having gone so far the Sanhedrin must now go further. A clash of forces was inevitable. Sometimes great events are heralded by small ones.

There is a popular saying in India, "When men are ripe for destruction, even straws turn into thunderbolts." A violent storm may be heralded by a slight rustling of the leaves. A spark may mean an explosion.

For months, perhaps for years, a wretched cripple had crouched beside the Temple gate, living upon the charity of those that passed by. He had settled down into the despair of the helpless. Peter and John became the instruments of his recovery. Health surged through the man's weakened and blemished body. He began a new life. He who had been a helpless wreck now rejoiced in abundant health and physical freedom. He could not only walk but leap. The people "were filled with wonder and amazement." The cure had not been wrought by clever surgical skill, but "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." It would be difficult to believe that any member of the Sanhedrin would be prejudiced against the healing of a sick man, but when that cure was effected "in the name" of the One who had been crucified by authority of the council, the matter assumed a new significance. The Sanhedrin objected very strenuously to any such procedure. For Peter had not failed to make

the event a text for a powerful sermon. The manifestation of Divine power through the name of Jesus was presented by Peter as an appeal for the whole Christian claim. *If Jesus had never been raised from the dead, this lame man would never have been healed.* That is the substance of Peter's argument. The enemies of Jesus were furious. They said in effect, "This will never do." So they took action. The apostles were imprisoned, and on the following day they were brought into court. Their authority was challenged, and the challenge was promptly accepted. No long argument was presented. No elaborate dogma was announced. The issue was clearly and quickly defined. "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." What could the Jewish authorities do? They surely could not persecute these men for bringing health and strength to a lame man. That would have involved insult to every worthy instinct of human nature. But they were equally determined not to allow such an act to be presented to the public as an evidence of the power of the Risen Christ. Yet what could

they do? "Beholding the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it." There stood the man. It was the same man. They knew that he was the same man, and they also knew that the people knew it. To have tried to prove that this was a case of mistaken identity or clever impersonation would have been silly, and Caiaphas and his group would only have weakened their own case by such an argument. And the man was "*standing.*" The cure was beyond all cavil or question. The Sanhedrin was not confronted by a heresy, or a tradition, or a creed, or a dream. "Beholding the man." They were face to face with a living fact, and "they could say nothing against it."

Here we have the first reported clash between the enemies and the followers of Jesus. It is a significant fact that this battle was fought upon a matter of personal experience. Something had taken place in the actual life of this man which was beyond question or debate. Not all the arguments which mortal mind can formulate could have persuaded the man that nothing had happened to him, and that his condition was just exactly the same as it had been through the preceding years.

He was a changed man, and the reality of the change was a matter of consciousness. Now the verdict of consciousness is final: no man can go beyond its findings. The man knew. When placed before a fact of consciousness the mightiest argument is futile, even if it be as massive as a Gibraltar Rock, or as delicate as a spider's web.

The enemies of Christ "could say nothing against it." Later they admitted "we cannot deny it." They were face to face with an unanswerable argument. The argument from Christian experience has never been answered. There is something prophetic in this early Christian narrative. Apparently the enemies of the Cross felt that prophetic element. The policy of threat and terror to which they resorted was prompted by a practical view of things. "But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them." They saw plainly enough that if this lame man could be healed so wonderfully, other and greater things might happen.

And much greater things *have* happened. For nearly twenty centuries the Christian Faith has been working in the lives of men and women. It has opened the doors of spiritual

bondage. It has broken the chains of evil habit. It has kindled joy in darkened and discouraged souls. It has changed human motives. It has reversed the whole drift and purpose of countless lives. It has made weak men strong, profane men devout, proud men humble, violent men tranquil. It has produced results. It has lifted men and women up to heights of goodness which none of the followers of other religions or cults have ever been able to attain. The Christian Faith has wrought as a dynamic in the realm of personal relations. It has always meant more than culture or ethics. It has conferred power. The man who accepts the religion of the Cross feels himself under an unmeasured obligation. Self-interest is dethroned; self-gratification is abandoned; self-seeking is ended. He regards life itself as the possession of his Lord. A new and wonderful power enters his being. He feels himself uplifted into new relations: "Old things have passed away and behold all things are become new." Other great religions furnish no parallel to this element of personal experience. Ethical systems and codes of conduct uninspired by the Resurrection do not belong to the same category of spiritual values.

Christianity furnishes an unanswerable credential in personal experience.

Several illustrations of this truth may not be out of place.

Nearly four hundred years after the birth of Christ a remarkable young man might have been seen walking the streets of Milan. He was about thirty-three years of age. He was born in Numidia in Northern Africa. His father had spent most of his life as a Pagan, while his mother was one of the most devout of the early Christians. This young man had been trained by his mother in the truths of the Christian faith, but he was headstrong, impetuous and wilful, and rejected all the restraints of his mother's faith. Before he had passed through his teens he had plunged into nearly every form of vicious conduct. He accuses himself of giving full rein to every evil passion. He wallowed in the worst excesses. His dissipations, however, were unable to arrest the workings of his restless mind. He wandered through the vagaries of Manicheism, but found no final satisfaction therein. After some time he moved forward into sounder philosophical studies and became a lecturer on rhetoric at Tagaste and then at Carthage. His

later sojourn at Rome was marked by disappointments, and from Rome he journeyed to Milan.

At this time the one outstanding personality of the northern city of Italy was Bishop Ambrose. He was a saint, a scholar, a powerful preacher and a fearless champion of the Faith. He dared to withhold the Holy Communion from the great Emperor Theodosius as a spiritual penalty for the massacre of his people in Thessalonica. Clad in the robes of a penitent the mighty emperor bowed in shame for days in Milan Cathedral, wincing beneath the flaming judgments of God as they were pronounced by the courageous Bishop. To that same Cathedral the dissolute Augustine wended his way. His motive was merely professional. He desired to study the preacher's style; his voice, his manner, his rhetoric. For the substance of the Bishop's preaching Augustine did not care. Later, however, the truth laid hold of him; he forgot the preacher's style in his message. The holiness of God, the guilt of sin, the shame of the sinner when confronted by the standards of holiness, the mercy of God in Christ, life as it could be lived under the Lordship of Jesus—these were the truths

that shook the man's being, as the leaf is shaken by the wind. This was no ignorant, excitable or emotional man; he was one of the great thinkers and administrators of history. The climax of the story can be told in his own words taken from his book "The Confessions." "I cast myself down, I know not how, under a fig-tree, giving full vent to my tears . . . not indeed in these words, yet to this purpose, spake I much unto Thee:—And Thou, O Lord, how long? How long, Lord, wilt Thou be angry—forever? Remember not our former iniquities. How long? How long? To-morrow and to-morrow? Why not now? Why is there not at this hour an end to my wickedness?"

Then while weeping in bitter contrition he seemed to hear a voice repeating the words, "Take up and read; take up and read." He returned to the room where his friend Alypius was sitting: "For there had I laid the volume of the Epistles. I seized, opened and in silence read that section on which my eyes first fell: Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the

lusts thereof." He tells us later, "I did not need to read further." That was the hour of Augustine's conversion. Something wonderful happened. The whole quality of the man's life was changed. The things which he had formerly loved he henceforth hated; the things he had formerly hated he henceforth loved. The whole of his subsequent life was a direct antithesis of his preceding life. He stands forth on the pages of history as one of the greatest men the world has ever known, and one of the saintliest, yet at thirty-two years of age Augustine was a moral wreck. It fell to him, more than to any other man, to guide the forces and fortunes of the Christian Church during those strategic days when the Roman Empire was crashing into ruins. Great as a theologian, as a spiritual leader, as a thinker, as an administrator, Augustine was perhaps greatest of all as a saint, and to-day millions of Christians bow in reverent thought before the record of his Christian experience.

The religion of the Resurrection works! Could any man, or group of men, have presented any argument against the Christian religion which could have shaken the faith of Augustine? Had such an argument been ad-

dressed to him, what would have been his reply? The substance of it would have been this, "It would be easier to doubt the reality of the sun that shines, or the winds that blow, than to doubt what is profoundest in my own being; for my faith rests not upon an argument, nor a dogma, nor even upon the testimony of the most reliable witnesses, but upon a personal experience which is an integral part of myself." How could Augustine, with his experience, have said anything else?

The scene of the following case is laid in England. The neighbourhood is marked by a Roman road, while the little hill where Caractacus made his last stand against the Romans looms up in the distance. Quaint touches of medievalism rest upon the whole countryside. We see a young man of exceptional physique; tall, powerful, with closely-knit frame, and a face indicating strength of will and reserves of passion. He is unable to sign his name, or even repeat the letters of the alphabet. His well-developed strength and agility have qualified him to take rank as the most popular boxer in the neighbourhood. He is a hard drinker, and in certain stages of intoxication he is a terror to the community.

His drunken excesses have left his little home without comfort, and his young wife and little child are sometimes on the verge of starvation. One Sunday evening some one dares him to go into a cottage where the Methodist services were held. He accepts the dare, and attends the service. He went in the spirit of defiance, if not blasphemy. His inmost soul, however, was gripped by something in that simple service. And how simple it was! There was no trained choir, no impressive organ, no stately ritual, no artistic appeal. There was indeed nothing, except the Gospel. But underneath the simple and unlettered statement of that Gospel the man winced and trembled. He started for the door, but returned to his seat. At the close of the service kindly hands were stretched out toward him, and loving voices appealed to him to leave the ways of sin. He was urged to repent and seek the Divine forgiveness. He broke with his past, utterly and permanently. He could only kneel and pray, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Again it was a case of something happening. The young man left that room *changed* in his inmost tastes, motives and intentions. For him there were no more carousings, no more Bed-

lams. Going to his miserable home he tenderly kissed his wife and child, saying, "God has forgiven me and you must forgive me, too." On the next day at the evening meal he said to his child, "Little one, will you do something for me, and will you do it every day?" The child answered, "Yes, Daddy, if I can." He continued, "Well, you go to school every day; you can read; will you teach me to read?" She gladly promised, thus becoming the man's first teacher. Under her instruction he learned to read, and daily he might have been seen carrying a small book with him as he travelled back and forth over his master's farm. He became steeped in the literature of the Bible and a few of the best books. In the little Methodist church of that village he became one of the leaders. Later he became a lay-preacher of remarkable power, and Sunday after Sunday he trudged many weary miles to proclaim the Evangel in some of the outlying villages of England. He stood as a rock against the intemperance, profanity and Sabbath-desecration of the neighbourhood, and no man within a radius of fifty miles received greater respect. He was a great spiritual hero.

Here is a vivid instance of personal experi-

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ence. Religion verifies itself by its fruitage. Suppose some one had gone to this man, Thomas Gough, and had presented the views of modern unbelief! Suppose the sceptic had said, "It is all uncertain, there are serious doubts about the reality of it all: indeed it may be an illusion." What would have happened? The man would have answered, "But I *know*; I *know* that something wonderful happened to me, and that the very truths of the Bible which you doubt have brought power and victory to my life. If I do not know that, then I know *nothing*, and there is no such thing as knowledge."

Knowing that man as I did I am confident that no argument could ever have shaken his assurance of the reality of Christian truth, because that truth had verified itself in his own experience.

In the English Midlands there may be found an interesting village of some three thousand inhabitants. It has several small factories, mills, and a considerable canal traffic. For many years it had been known far and wide as one of the most drunken villages in England. Its religious life was at a low ebb. An evangelical church in the neighbouring city de-

cided to open a mission in its midst, and call the people to Christian repentance. A young minister, accompanied by three lay-colleagues, stood on the village green, sang hymns, offered prayer, and addressed the small company that gathered around them. One young woman was impressed by the appeal and invited the preacher to visit her family. There he found the father, the mother, and a grown-up family of four sons and daughters. Drink had wrought havoc in the home, and the family life was marked by the evident tokens of ungodliness. Within one year a great change was manifest. Again something happened. The whole family made a profession of the Christian Faith. Drink was given up. Family prayer was observed. A devout and reverent spirit dominated the home. Life was dedicated to new ideals, and shone with a new splendour. The habits and interests of the past were entirely abandoned, new and different pursuits were followed.

Suppose any one had challenged the truthfulness of the Christian religion in the presence of that family! Such a challenge would have seemed utterly wild. Immediately these people would have said, "But we have an ex-

perience which is as real to us as our own existence. We know what we were; we know what we now are! What changed us?" In vain would unbelief battle with such an experience as they possessed.

These are only isolated statements of a Christian experience which has been shared by millions. There are external variations in this experience. Not every conversion to the faith is marked by the dramatic elements and deep emotion which gather about the careers of an Augustine or a Bunyan. Divine grace was as truly operative in a Timothy who "from a child" knew and followed the Scriptures as it was in Paul with his sudden and revolutionary conversion. But beneath all the outer differences of experience there is a deeper unity. These millions of believers share something in common. They embody the same virtues; they are arrayed against the same or similar vices; they are inspired by kindred motives; they are energized by the same means of grace; they are thrilled by the same hopes. Obviously collusion is impossible. If the Christian believers of the first century are compared with those of the twentieth, and if the converts in foreign lands are compared with

those in our midst, it will be found that they all share in the same kind of experience. In all these cases the Christian religion has conferred blessings and conquests of an exactly similar kind.

Some years ago a young physician passed through a period of religious doubt. He was impressed by the apparent conflict between Science and Faith, and his studies as a medical man had created misgivings concerning the basis of religion. One Sunday evening he went into a little Methodist church in Canada. The service took the form of an "Experience Meeting." Any one was free to state the meaning and value of religion in his or her life. Some thirty or forty people accepted the invitation. Each told a separate story. Each spoke from the standpoint of personal knowledge and life. The young physician listened. He said to himself, "A medical man lays aside all preferences and prejudices and looks at facts. These people are stating what they believe to be facts. Are they impostors? I know them to be among the most reliable people in the community, and on any ordinary matter I would accept their word. No, they are not impostors. Are they self-deceived? How can

all of them be self-deceived, and self-deceived on the same issue? No two statements are exactly alike, yet all of these statements have a mass of experience in which each person shares. The substance of their assertion must be true!" And the young physician accepted the faith largely on the strength of personal testimony. Incredulity is no mark of superior intelligence. When an African chief was told that water could become cold enough to become solid, he was incredulous. His scepticism was no hall-mark of advanced mentality. It was loyalty to the scientific spirit that impelled the physician to place an adequate value upon the facts of experience with which he was confronted. The argument was such as to preclude all answer.

Few modern writers have dealt with this phase of the situation more convincingly than has Dr. R. W. Dale in his priceless little book, "The Living Christ and the Four Gospels." The first chapter of the book is entitled "The Argument from Experience." He writes in relation to believers, "Whatever may have been the original grounds of their faith, that faith has been verified in their personal experience. They have trusted in Christ for certain

great and wonderful things, and have received them; what they have received assures them that Christ is alive, that He is within reach, and that He is the Saviour and Lord of men. That they have received these blessings in answer to their faith is a matter of personal consciousness. They know it, as they know that fire burns. . . . The faith in the Living Christ of those who have had the great experiences of His power and grace is not shaken by any assaults on the historical trustworthiness of the story of His early ministry. Much less can it be shaken by discussions concerning the nature and origin of the ancient Scriptures of the Jewish people. Their confidence in the Old and the New Testaments may perhaps have to be suspended until the controversies of scholars are closed, or until, on historical and critical grounds, they can see their own way to firm and definite conclusions about the main questions at issue; but not their confidence in Christ. They may be uncertain about the books; they are sure about Him. . . . Their faith in Him rests on foundations which lie far beyond the reach of scientific and historical criticism. They know for themselves that Christ is the Saviour of men;

they have received through Him the remission of their sins: He has translated them into the Divine Kingdom: He has given them strength for righteousness, and through Him they have found God.”¹

Unbelief may seek to discount this credential by materialistic explanation. It may say (and it is the only thing it can say), “We admit these most interesting cases of religious conversion, at least in substance. But what do they prove? May they not be strange subjective activities? The human brain is capable of queer antics. Under the spell of some deep emotion, under the pressure of some intense excitement, is it not possible for a man to be subjectively elevated, thrilled, almost entranced? And may he not quite easily come to regard this as almost a rebirth?”

In other words, a mental explosion, a brain-storm? The reply is obvious. In a large proportion of cases religious experience is marked by little or no excitement. Multitudes of the most distinguished Christians have entered the fold through a process of careful thought and deliberate choice. They have not

¹ “The Living Christ and the Four Gospels,” R. W. Dale, D. D., pp. 10-23.

been swept into the kingdom by any violent gust of emotion. We readily admit the mental agitation that marked the conversion of Augustine; it was natural and reasonable, considering the kind of life he had led. But no such agitation marked the conversion of George John Romanes, the distinguished scientist. It was deliberate and logical thinking that brought him to the Cross. And millions have been brought by the same process. In saying this we cast no suspicion upon genuine emotion. There are other experiences besides religion in which emotion is accepted as a valid and legitimate factor. Love, friendship, patriotism, are often saturated in deep and solemn feeling, but no one thinks of dismissing them as mere mental aberrations or subjective illusions. As a matter of fact one is more likely to find excitement in a political meeting or on the Stock Exchange than in a Cathedral service. Why should unbelief recognize it in other provinces of life and yet deny the reality of religious experience when "touched by emotion"?

In all ordinary cases abnormal subjective activity leads to abnormal results. Mental explosions and brain-storms are followed by vio-

lence, generally of a criminal nature. But in all genuine cases of religious conversion you have transition to a higher, nobler and finer life. The profane man begins to pray; the drunken man accepts the life of sobriety; the dishonest man adopts the highest standards of honour; the impure man seeks the clean heart and the right spirit; passion gives place to patience; cruelty to kindness; self-seeking to service. The example of the sinless Christ is made the determining factor of experience; "that I may win Christ and be found in Him." Some converts outdistance others in their progress toward these goals, but it is in this direction and toward these graces that all true conversion tends. Can any sincere seeker of truth bring himself to believe that such a type of experience can be explained by some curious form of mental disturbance—probably a brain-storm? Would not unbelief subject itself to ridicule by seriously advocating such a theory?

That wise Christian teacher, Dr. Wm. Newton Clarke writes, "Is there really such a God (as Christ reveals)? How shall one know? How find whether here is really the counterpart to our religious nature? The test of the reality of counterparts to our powers is found

in experience. It is by experience that we know light to be the counterpart of the eye, and sound of the ear. Only by the same test can we ascertain that there is a counterpart for our religious nature. . . . Hence any one who would have full proof of the good God's reality must put it to the experimental test. He must take the good God for real, and receive the confirmation that will follow. If there is such a Being, one who sincerely casts himself in simple confidence upon Him to trust Him and do His will, will find living evidence that He exists. Such a God will respond to confidence. If He is a living spirit the trust of a living human spirit will find Him.

“This experiment has been made, and experience has brought its answer. Christianity is a life of faith and fellowship with God, and men have been living in it for ages.”²

Hundreds of years ago Roger Bacon said, “Experience alone gives accurate knowledge.” For nearly two thousand years the Christian Faith has met this rigid test. Its truths have fitted into human life, as the key fits the wards of the lock. It has verified itself in the deep

² “An Outline of Christian Theology,” Wm. Newton Clarke, D. D., p. 124.

realities of experience. When Christian believers speak in confident and even positive terms they are not to be charged with arrogance. There are some things which they know. Against the verdicts of consciousness the waves of scepticism beat in vain. The testimony of believers is all the more convincing when we remember that the faith which they have accepted has always cut against the grain of human impulse and desire. It has set itself against the currents of inclination and self-interest. It has reversed the whole programme of life in the cause of a high, difficult and apparently impossible ideal. Let unbelief be reasonable. Let it look at this long line of witnesses stretching from apostolic days to the present;—a line of witnesses made up of young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, and drawn from nearly “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”³ They are witnessing to the same truths; they are reciting the same story; they are voicing the same experiences. Their veracity is beyond question, for many thousands of them are martyrs to the truths they assert. Their statements are original, spontaneous and mani-

³ Rev. 5:2.

fold in form, yet they all dove-tail into each other, and blend, like the various voices of a chorus, in the one tremendous hymn of redemption, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Confronting this situation, what is the task of unbelief? It must prove that this host of witnesses is made up either of impostors or fanatics. These millions are either deceivers or self-deceived. Let unbelief achieve such a triumph,—and then what? Then let human history close with one universal roar of laughter, the laughter of cynicism, mockery and scorn. Fate is shown to be only a coarse and pitiless humourist; nothing is sincere, nothing is sure, nothing is worthy, and all experience is either a senseless joke or a hideous lie.

VI

THE WITNESS OF HISTORY

UNBELIEF may not undertake the task of destroying the credential of faith based upon individual experience; it may, however, seek to discount its value. It may say, "The previous argument based upon experience is grounded in individual cases; as such the unit is too small to accept as proof of a religion that claims a universal and final place in the world. What is the action of Christian faith upon group life? What are its effects upon nations, eras and civilizations?"

Here history is the witness.

What kind of a world was it into which Christ was born? What were world conditions when the Christian faith made its first contacts with life? "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king——" These words are significant. "*Herod the king.*" The description of this

phantom king given by Canon Farrar in his "Life of Christ" may well be quoted. "Although doubts have been thrown on the massacre of the infants, it is profoundly in accordance with all that we know of Herod's character. The master-passions of that able but wicked prince were a most unbounded ambition, and a most excruciating jealousy. His whole career was red with the blood of murder. He had massacred priests and nobles; he had decimated the Sanhedrin; he had caused the High Priest, his brother-in-law, the young and noble Aristobulus, to be drowned in pretended sport before his eyes; he had ordered the strangulation of his favourite wife, the beautiful Asmonean princess Mariamne, though she seems to have been the only human being whom he passionately loved. His sons Alexander, Aristobulus and Antipater,—his uncle Joseph, Antigonus and Alexander, the uncle and father of his wife, his mother-in-law Alexandra, his kinsman Cortobanus, his friends Dositheus and Godias, were but a few of the multitudes who fell victims to his suspicious and guilty terrors. His brother Pheroras and his son Archelaus narrowly escaped execution by his orders. Neither the

blooming youth of the prince Aristobulus, nor the white hairs of the King Hyrcanus had protected them from his fawning and treacherous fury. Deaths by strangulation, deaths by burning, deaths by being cleft asunder, deaths by secret assassination, confessions forced by unutterable torture, acts of insolent and inhuman lust, mark the annals of a reign which was so cruel that, in the energetic language of the Jewish ambassadors to the Emperor Augustus, the survivors during his lifetime were even more miserable than the sufferers."

In describing his death, Dr. Farrar writes with deep feeling:

"The wretched old man, whom men had called the Great, lay in savage frenzy awaiting his last hour. As he knew that no one would shed one tear for *him*, he determined that they should shed many for *themselves*, and issued an order that under pain of death, the principal families in the kingdom and the chiefs of the tribes should come to Jericho. They came,—and then, shutting them in the hippodrome, he secretly commanded his sister Salome that at the moment of his death they should all be massacred. And so, choking as it were with blood, devising massacres in its

very delirium, the soul of Herod passed forth into the night.”¹

The world into which Jesus was born was a world that tolerated a Herod. It would be absurd to suggest that all the rulers and leaders of that age were as vicious as this Jewish monarch. But that Jesus commenced His earthly career in a province over which such a monster as Herod held nominal rule is a significant fact.

Rome ruled the world. It was the symbol of power. It knew little of pity or mercy. Prisoners were slain in war. Women were captured or bought just like so many sheep or cattle, to be the personal property of the victors. Licentiousness and cruelty were two of the most appalling vices of the Augustan age, and both of them were fostered by certain forms of heathen religion. When Rome conquered Greece and laid plundering hands upon the loot of the East it lost whatever virtue it had inherited from a more strenuous age. It boasted of great multitudes of slaves, and no argument is needed to prove the uncounted opportunities for sensual indulgences which such a vast system of slavery presented. The glad-

¹“The Life of Christ,” F. W. Farrar, D. D., pp. 32-36.

iatorial sports of that age were steeped in cruelty and debauchery. Men fought in the arena with savage beasts until the beast slew the man or the man slew the beast. The more bloody the struggle the greater seemed to be the enjoyment of the surging multitudes. Infanticide, or the murder of little children, was recognized as legitimate and conventional in classical heathenism. This crime prevailed in Europe for centuries after the birth of Christ. Its continuation is no reflection upon the Christian religion but is rather an evidence of its firmly entrenched position in the thought and feeling of mankind when it was challenged by the wondrous words "Suffer little children . . . for of such is the Kingdom of God."

Even to this day this crime prevails in certain districts of China that have not been reached by the Christian Gospel, nor by the ministries of that general type of civilization which may be regarded as Christian. Only a few years ago a Pagan woman of China used these words, "A daughter is a troublesome and expensive thing, in any case. Not only has she to be fed, but there is all the trouble of binding her feet, getting her betrothed, and making up her wedding garments. Really it is

no wonder that so many baby girls are slain at birth." The author of the book "Things Chinese" estimates that an average of forty per cent. of baby girls are assassinated in the province of Fukhein. A similar fate frequently befalls male infants if they are at all malformed or inclined to be very delicate or troublesome. Forty years ago Dr. Hartwell estimated that the average of female children destroyed was about fifty per cent. in the province of Foochoo. This atrocious crime is not regarded seriously. The social conscience is not shocked. There is nothing in the way of organized protest against it. It is looked upon as easily within the limits of social propriety. These conditions give us some idea of the Pagan world in the first century, and of those parts of our modern world as yet untouched by the Christian Faith.

Christian scholarship has abundant evidence in support of its contention that the sin of impurity was scarcely open to censure in the heathen world. Even granting that certain virtues had been endorsed by Pagan systems, we must remember that Christianity was born in an age marked by utter scepticism of such virtues. As Dr. Fisher has said, "Greek

scepticism spread through the Roman educated classes. Cultivated men wondered that soothsayers who chanced to meet could look one another in the face without laughter.”² A great thinker and scholar has not hesitated to pass this judgment on the world of Christ’s day, “When Christianity appeared, the Gentile religions were both at their best and at their worst; they had reached the highest result of their wisdom and art, but they had also descended to the lowest point of their moral impotence. The world was never so highly cultivated, and never so ethically vile. But both the strength and the weakness of heathenism were armed against the new faith, which was the object of the converging attacks of all the forces of the Gentile world.”³

In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans Paul is speaking from the standpoint of an observer rather than a theologian, and the description which he gives of the heathen world seems almost incredible. We are awed by the capacities of human nature for evil. No

² “History of the Christian Church,” Geo. P. Fisher, D. D., p. 10.

³ “Christian Theology,” W. B. Pope, D. D., Vol. I, p. 144.

great historian has denied the truth of Paul's indictment.

In the midst of such conditions Jesus appeared. Against the dark and sullen tides of world-evil the Cross was planted as the very protest and plea of God. In the midst of unspeakable immoralities a new and shining ideal was disclosed. Men were called to repent of all known sin and to hold fellowship with a God of infinite holiness. The springs of life were cleansed and hallowed. The Christian home was established as the unit of a new and redeemed humanity. This is not to claim the family as a direct creation of Christianity. Family life had existed in some form or other for ages, but a wide gulf separates the Pagan from the Christian home. It may be regarded as the simplest and perhaps the oldest form of group life. It had been marked both by polygamy and polyandry, and of the two polyandry was perhaps the more primitive. Professor Peabody writes, "Perhaps the series of incidents suggested by McLennan occurs; first, in a state of constant warfare, the neglect of female infants; then a consequent lack of women within the tribe; then the necessity for exogamy, or the procuring of wives from out-

side the tribe; and as a consequence, the custom of marriage by capture, or the recruiting of domestic life from other tribes.”⁴

Christianity brought the individual man and woman to its altar, and consecrated their union upon their pledge of mutual love and deathless devotion. In its sacred writings it made the mutual love of husband and wife a symbol, and almost a sacrament of that love Divine enshrined in the Cross. Indeed such was the sacredness of family life that in the early Church a second marriage, following the decease of husband or wife, was looked upon with disfavour, and the Christian believer contracting such a marriage felt himself placed upon the defensive. Christianity took the family as it found it, lifted it to a new level, stamped upon it a new sanctity, flooded it with light, and virtually made it a new creation. Every reliable historian admits this.

A similar change was initiated in the social relations of mankind. The case of slavery was typical. It existed as a mighty institution, strongly entrenched and almost unchallenged. Apparently the Christian Faith ad-

⁴“Jesus Christ and the Social Question,” Peabody, p. 138.

duced no direct argument against it. It did not direct any frontal attack upon it. With wonderful spiritual strategy it undermined it. It did this by the proclamation of a universal Gospel. Both the slave and the slave-owner heard the message of redeeming mercy. Both responded to the appeal of the Evangel. Both gathered around the Lord's table. There, kneeling side by side, both repeated the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father." There the truth of God began to bite like an acid into the chains of the slave. Vested interests of evil began to weaken. Gradually the slave-owner saw the truth; "if God is my Father, and if He is the Father of this man beside me, then we are brethren." There was no escape from this conclusion. But if they were brethren when kneeling at the altar, they were brethren everywhere. Obviously men could not believe in the universal Fatherhood of God and continue to support slavery, without involving themselves in glaring contradiction. Slowly but surely the whole fabric of slavery weakened. Here and there all over the empire Christian men began to liberate their slaves, while others so drafted their wills that their slaves should be freed after the death of their owners. Even

this imperfect form of Christian obligation witnessed to the desire to terminate the evil system. The triumph of the Faith over this form of evil was achieved in spite of the fact that some of the great Christian leaders failed to interpret the truth of the Gospel, and were tolerant of the institution with which the Gospel was in conflict. In this instance, as in others, Christianity has had to bear the odium incurred by faulty Christians, but no fair-minded critic will press this charge. That slavery existed in nations nominally Christian as late as the nineteenth century is a fact that the Christian apologist must admit with a sense of deep humiliation; yet every honest thinker can see the essential and inescapable contradiction between the Christian ideal and the system in question,—and Christianity has a right to ask that it be judged by that which it is seeking to do, in spite of the inconsistencies of many who are its nominal followers.

Every point of contact between Christianity and the world has been marked by purifying ministries. Dr. Hillis remarks, “Journeying up the Nile to Thebes and Memphis, we are amazed to find that hideous vices were once worshipped as gods in those cities, where

splendour and sin were united like gold and mud in the same image. We remember also that Cicero, who argues so eloquently for the rights of the poet Archias, also used his eloquence to defend a gladiatorial fight in which a thousand slaves were slain to satisfy the bloodthirsty instincts of eighty thousand of the leading ladies and gentlemen of that so-called 'Golden Age.' Lecky speaks of ten vices of Cicero's day, only two of which remain, intemperance and the social evil."⁵

Any fair-minded seeker of truth can readily see that the Christian Gospel, which declares the Divine Sonship of every man, must be in continued conflict with any system which degrades the individual, or which necessarily prevents him from realizing a worthy Christian manhood.

Objections may be raised to this whole argument on the ground that cruelties have been practiced and crimes perpetrated in the name of the Christian religion. Such men as Torquemada, Alva and Cortez will be referred to, and their evil memories will be revived. The Christian apologist must admit, with pain

⁵ "The Influence of Christ in Modern Life," Newell Dwight Hillis, D. D., p. 49.

and shame, the charges brought against these men, and others of this type. He cannot, however, allow such charges to be accepted as valid arguments against the Christian religion. American patriotism is a fact, in spite of anything connected with the name and memory of Benedict Arnold. Should some medical man administer deadly poison to a group of his patients, and should the act be followed by fatal results, not one of us would condemn Science, nor should we call for the suppression of the medical schools for the training of physicians and surgeons. We should know that medical science would be the first to condemn such a base and unworthy practitioner, and that, in any case, it would refuse to be judged by his record. No sincere critic will judge the early Church by a Judas Iscariot, nor the Church of the Christian centuries by a Cortez, a Torquemada, an Alva, a Henry VIII of England, or a Louis XIV of France.

The main contention of this argument remains unimpaired. The claims of the Christian religion stand justified by its work in the world. The honour, happiness and blessedness of the human race have invariably followed the track of the Christian Faith, when

that Faith has been fully and sincerely proclaimed.

Less than two hundred years ago a lamentable condition of things obtained in England. The energies of the Reformation movement were largely expended. The Established Church failed to speak to the conscience and imagination of men. The ministries of religion were perfunctory and ineffective. A wide-spread scepticism prevailed. Religion was more a matter of jest than of serious thought. The people were steeped in both ignorance and vice. Few could read a page or sign their own names. Nothing was cheaper than human life. The death penalty was inflicted for comparatively trivial misdemeanours. The law recognized over two hundred capital offences. "If a man injured Westminster Bridge, or cut down young trees, or shot at rabbits, or stole property valued at five shillings, or returned prematurely from transportation, for any of these offences he was immediately hanged."⁶ Executions were public, and were frequently regarded as holiday diversions. Boys of tender age, often un-

⁶ Mackenzie's "History of the Nineteenth Century," pp. 77, 78.

der eight, were set to work for twelve hours a day in mines, collieries and factories. London saloons were placarded with such signs as these, "Come inside and get drunk for a penny, and dead drunk for twopence. Straw provided free." A leading English aristocrat, in his letters to his son, felt free to instruct him in the arts of seduction. Hannah More said, "We saw but one Bible in the whole parish of Cheddar, and that was used to prop a flower-pot." The two favourite texts in the pulpits of the Established Church were "Be not righteous overmuch," and "Let your moderation be known unto all men." This deplorable yet not remote era of English history is graphically described by John Richard Green in his "Short History of the English People," and the foregoing statements are largely based on his authority.

It was at such a period that a great religious leader appeared. He had all the grace, culture and literary charm of Oxford University. Through all his travels in England, Scotland and Ireland John Wesley, "the little man on horseback," was never known to use a slang expression. With George Whitfield and other devoted colleagues, this man led a religious

movement that shook Great Britain. "The world is my parish," he said, and true to that extended vision, he and his colleagues played no small part in laying the spiritual foundations of our Republic. "In September, 1784, in his private chamber, he set apart the itinerant preachers as presbyters, and laid his hands on Coke, consecrating him to the office of Superintendent of the work in America. . . . In May, 1789, its chief pastors presented an address to President Washington beginning with the superscription, 'We, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church'; and since then its life and work have been incorporated with those of the nation in which it is to-day the largest Protestant denomination."⁷

As the result of the great Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century which was initiated by Wesley and his comrades, Great Britain was visited by a spiritual Renaissance. Every organized evil was shaken. Vast fields of semi-pagan life were claimed for the Cross. Slavery was ended in the British Empire. Robert Raikes initiated the Sabbath school in Gloucester. The Foreign Missionary move-

⁷"The Religious Leaders of Oxford," S. Parkes Cadman, D. D., pp. 358, 359.

ment was born. The "Seven Men of Preston" started the Temperance crusade which is now girdling the globe. Plimsoll revealed the cruel conspiracy by means of which sailors were sent to their deaths so that ship-owners might recover ample sums of money from overinsured but unsafe ships. John Howard took a humane spirit into the foul and filthy prisons of his country, and later into the dungeons and lazar-houses of Europe, dying as a martyr to his cause in distant Russia. Still later Lord Shaftesbury passed his beneficent factory acts and their impact was felt far beyond the shores of his own country. Peace Societies sprang into being. The principle of arbitration was introduced into the councils of mankind, nor is the value of that principle to be lightly brushed aside because it failed to prevent the recent World War. No living man can measure the blessings which have crowned the lives of millions of men, women and children through the movement known as the "Great Revival" led by John Wesley and his Christian brethren.

How does the unbeliever interpret such spiritual crises and achievements as these? In many instances I fear they are only inter-

preted in a loose and slovenly fashion. Unbelief cannot trace these wide-spread and beneficent changes to the Christian Gospel without surrendering its own case. Resorting to vague, if not careless, speech it refers to "the spread of education." Only a foolish man would decry education, but it is obvious that its value as a redeeming factor in the life of the world has been terribly overestimated. The effect of purely secular education on some minds is to make an otherwise clumsy wrongdoer into a shrewd and efficient criminal, unless such education be accompanied by some religious ministry. Crooks and scoundrels can be found among college graduates. Dr. Strong writes, "The republics of Greece and Rome, and, if I mistake not, all the republics that have ever lived and died, were more intelligent at the end than at the beginning, but growing intelligence could not compensate for decaying morals."⁸ On this point the words of Washington in his Farewell Address are well worth quoting, "Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can

⁸ "Our Country," Josiah Strong, D. D., p. 192.

prevail in exclusion of religious principle." Possibly no country in the world had higher standards of secular education and scientific research than had Germany, but the part that Germany played in plunging the world into war, and the fearful atrocities justly charged against her, furnish abundant evidence that secular education does not and will not save mankind.

The great spiritual improvements to which history bears witness cannot fairly be credited to this source.

Sometimes unbelief ignores the direct agency of the Christian religion in the higher life of the world by tacitly crediting all real human progress to Evolution. Where this attitude is not due to intellectual carelessness I fear it must be regarded as downright insincerity. The Christian religion was a new factor introduced into the life of the world, and enough has already been written to show that its very introduction was met with the most intense hostility of which the world was capable. It is not excited theologians or biased Christian apologists, but clear-eyed secular historians like Green who trace the wonderful developments of the last century and a half to

the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century.

A still more vivid illustration may be used.

Most intelligent people have some clear idea of cannibalism—"The killing of men and women, and the subsequent eating of their flesh." We all unite in regarding it as one of the most loathsome aspects of social savagery. Its prevalence has been much more frequent and recent than many suppose. Over great tracts of our world this custom has been practiced within the memory of men now living. Rev. James Chalmers reported that he discovered abundant evidence of cannibal practice of the most filthy description in New Guinea. According to his testimony it was the custom when a man was shot down for all to rush upon him for the purpose of biting off his nose from his body and swallowing it, because "the one who accomplishes this feat is looked upon as greater than the person who shot the victim." After such an achievement he was the man who stood out as the hero of the hunt. It is well to remember that Chalmers commenced his work in New Guinea only half a century ago. It was while this brave man was labouring amid such conditions that the unfor-

tunate ship *St. Paul* with over three hundred Chinese passengers fell into the hands of the natives. "They cooped up their victims like animals marked for slaughter, and clubbed, cooked and ate so many every day until only four men were left." This narrative may be found in the *Missionary Record* of August 1895. To-day we may travel at our convenience all over New Guinea with no more fear of such a fate than in our own land. What has wrought the change? The Christian Gospel faithfully preached and consistently exemplified by Christian men. If any doubt remains of the truth of this statement it should be removed by the testimony of the men who were once violent savages but who are now living exemplary lives.

Dr. J. S. Dennis, that great authority on Christian Missions, writes as follows, "Not very long ago the ship *Scottish Dale* was wrecked on Vatoa, in the Fiji group of islands. The crew were alarmed when they saw a native boat bearing down upon them, and put forth every effort to flee from the clutches of those whom they supposed to be cannibal savages. When they reached the harbour of Suva, on the southern coast of Viti Levu, a

distance of nearly 250 miles, and found they were under the protection of the British flag, they congratulated themselves on their narrow escape from a dreadful fate. Their alarm was needless, as Christian missions had already transformed the Vatoans from ruthless cannibals into kindly Christians, and the speed with which they were hastening to the shipwrecked men was simply due to their desire to help the unfortunate sailors. These men were told, "You would have been as safe as in any European or American city, since the Vatoans had saved many shipwrecked crews, freely giving them food and lodging, and preserving their stranded goods which they freely restored to their owners."⁹ Yet these were the sons of men who had been savage and brutal cannibals. Granting the truth of these and similar narratives, can any fair-minded thinker hesitate to credit these marvellous changes to the Christian Gospel in the relation of cause and effect?

Charles Darwin has sometimes been represented as an enemy of the Christian religion. Was he? Darwin made two journeys to the

⁹"Christian Missions and Social Progress," J. S. Dennis, D. D., Vol. II, pp. 338-339.

South Sea Islands at an interval of thirty years. Very soon after his first visit a strong missionary enterprise was established in these islands, and in twenty-five years it wrought such changes that Darwin could hardly believe the evidence of his own eyes. On his return to England he sent a cheque for £25 to the Church of England Missionary Society as a token of his appreciation of the change wrought by the Christian religion among savage peoples. On the occasion of his visit to a mission for the Maoris of New Zealand he uttered these significant words, "The work of the missionary is the enchanter's wand." Was not that almost equivalent to a declaration of belief in miracle? Was it not virtually an avowal of Christian faith?

Not by the working of some blind, impersonal cosmic forces, but by the revelation of One who was infinitely holy, and who spoke to men in terms of mercy and love, have these changes been wrought. The Gospel has verified its claims in the life of mankind. The wilderness and the solitary place have been made glad, and the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as the rose. The fruitage of faith is found in life.

We need not go back even as far as the last century to see these miracles of grace in action. Modern India presents a fascinating study. Every student of Indian life knows that its population is separated into distinct castes, and that between these castes there is no form of contact. Lower than the lowest caste will be found a great group of fifty millions of people. They are *outcastes*. They are apparently too low to be included in the lowest level of the caste system. They have no rights. Hindu religion explains their miserable condition as due to evil behaviour in some previous form of existence, possibly millions of years ago. "They are not allowed to take water from the village well, for the caste people hold that their unclean touch would contaminate it. . . . At a recent public meeting in Madras one of them plaintively asked why they should be debarred from public wells and tanks, whereas cattle and dogs were allowed the benefit of them."¹⁰ It is next to impossible for the children of these wretched people to obtain an education. Their employment is of the lowest and most repellent type. They are usually excluded from public roads, markets, and

¹⁰ "Building with India," D. J. Fleming, p. 165.

places of worship. Economically their condition is one of serfdom, if not in form, at least in substance. This is the lot of a group of people in modern India, and the group is nearly as large as half the population of the United States.

The Christian Gospel has been taken to this cowed and dejected people, and the results have been more than encouraging. To them the Gospel has opened up a new world. The doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood enables them to claim brotherhood with all men. It dooms caste as it destroyed slavery. In some parts of the country there have been mass movements toward the Christian Faith. Fleming writes, "Very often these mass movements toward Christianity have been unexpected, and usually they have been so overwhelming in their numbers that they have found the missions quite unprepared to deal adequately with them."¹¹ Should this great missionary work continue to deepen and expand as Christian leaders expect, the whole of this "outcaste" life of India may be changed, perhaps within a generation. In that case, how will unbelief interpret the change? We seriously ask one question; will

¹¹ "Building with India," D. J. Fleming, p. 165.

it be fair on the part of some future sociologist, with an anti-Christian bias, to explain this marvellous movement in India in terms of *evolution*? For that is what he will be tempted to do.

Confronting such conditions of crime, ignorance and wretchedness as those which have already yielded to the preaching of the Christian Gospel, what could unbelief have done? What weapons could it have used? Upon what resources could it have drawn? What possible motive could it have felt for world-redemption? Is it possible for unbelief, *as* unbelief, to make a single constructive proposal?

In the year 325 A. D. the Council of Nicea was convened. It met soon after the conclusion of the persecutions waged by Rome against the Christians. An Edict of Toleration had been proclaimed, and a nominally Christian emperor sat upon the imperial throne. About three hundred Christian leaders met together to help define the doctrines and decide the program of the Church. We are told that many of them bore the scars left upon them by the torture of the Diocletian persecution. "There sat Paphnutius, Bishop of

the Thebaid, who halted to his seat, trailing a leg of which the sinews had been cut while he toiled in the mines, and showing by his seared and hollow eye-socket the anguish he had undergone in the persecution. There Paul, a Mesopotamian Bishop, uplifted in benediction a hand which the fire had scorched.”¹² Others had been branded by hot irons or had suffered some form of mutilation. It is doubtful if a single member of that Council had been free from the risk of torture and death.

Can unbelief duplicate such a scene? Is there any instance in which the leaders of unbelief have ever come together to report human progress at the cost of the suffering and martyrdom of unbelievers? Is it Christian belief or scepticism which has sweat blood to promote world-redemption? Unbelief has no motive for such sacrificial service. Scepticism, as such, has no kinship with the Cross; therefore it builds no hospitals for the suffering, no mission schools for the ignorant, no homes for orphans, no rescue stations for the lepers! Is this challenged? Let unbelief point to a single instance in which it has sent one of its

¹² “Lives of the Fathers,” F. W. Farrar, D. D., Vol. I, p. 355.

own apostles into the world's dark and desolate places to do a work resembling that of Carey in India, Bishop Hannington or Dr. Livingstone in Africa, Morrison in China, Judson in Burmah, Chalmers in New Guinea, or Grenfell in Labrador. Let Christianity and unbelief be judged by their fruits! Can any test be fairer or more convincing? Here Christianity might well rest its case.

In order to destroy the force of this credential unbelief may refer to the World War. In that awful crisis in human affairs it may find some material for rejoinder. The substance of its reply may take the following form: "This credential, based upon the influence of the Christian Faith in history, might have carried weight a decade ago. It is different now. Has not the World War destroyed the force of the argument? Have we not seen the collapse of Christianity? The fair heavens have been darkened by the smoke of burning villages and cities. The green earth has been drenched by tides of human blood. Millions of the finest of the young men of the highest civilization have been swept away in the pride and flower of their manhood. Other

millions have been maimed, mutilated or blinded for life. Priceless works of art have been destroyed. Gigantic debts have been piled up which threaten to force Europe into bankruptcy. Bestial passions have been let loose. Maidenhood has been ravished. The graves have been ripped open, and the bodies of the dead despoiled. Uncounted hosts of innocent noncombatants, including the aged and the infant, have been annihilated. Hymns of hate have been sung by millions—hymns that sound like the ravings of madness rather than the expressions of rational feeling. Even since the armistice bitter animosities have been created which may find their fruitage in another and more brutal war. Where is God? Where is Christ? Where can we find evidence of a Christian Faith that redeems? In the horrors of a world war, horrors countless in number and nameless in shame, do we not see the failure of Christianity?"

Many have asked this question, some in a quibbling spirit, others with an intensity of interest which commands respect.

The World War does not prove the failure of Christianity; it proves the utter failure of all its substitutes.

If we select Germany as the object of special examination it is not because we assume that all of the world's guilt was found in one nation. It *is* assumed, however, as something beyond question, that Germany was responsible for the initiation of the war, and was mainly responsible for the atrocities that marked its procedure. If this contention be granted we are free to consider the moral condition of Germany prior to the war. Did it not represent a nation from which the Christianity of the New Testament had been largely banished? The churches of Germany were almost empty; the Sabbath was no longer a day of worship; Christian theology had been revised, if not emasculated, by a rationalism largely irreligious; and the Christian leaders of former generations were repudiated for such substitutes as Nietzsche, Treitschke, Bernhardt, Haeckel, and others of their type. The Christian interpretation of life was abandoned by the almost universal adoption of a purely materialistic philosophy. Darwinism was taken up from the realm of vegetable and animal life, and was made the ruling principle in all national interests and relationships. It was assumed and persistently taught that the method

of nature based on struggle, rapine and bloody conquest, and working through the survival of the strongest toward the improvement of type, was the supreme law for groups and nations. If one sees two wolves fighting over a bone, and if, for the sake of capturing the bone, the one wolf kills the other, we do not subject the victor to moral censure. That seems to be nature's way of improving the type to which this animal belongs. The probability is that the stronger wolf has survived, and the type has been fractionally raised by his survival. So teaches Darwin. In Germany this method of procedure was enthroned as the sovereign law of life. The adage "Might is Right" is thus seen to be rooted in a philosophy which involves the absolute contradiction of Jesus and the negation of the Cross.

In Germany it was definitely taught that as long as the State was promoting its own interests, it could do no wrong, no matter what excesses or agonies it inflicted, because there was nothing above the State to pass judgment or impose penalties upon it. There was a national reversion to the cosmic process. With this atheistic dogma asserted at every turn, it was no wonder that war was spoken of as a

“biological necessity.” This was the moulding and determining dogma which was accepted on nearly all hands by the German people. Nietzsche voices the deepest elements of this view when he writes, “One must resist all sentimental weakness; life in its essence is appropriation, injury, the overpowering of whatever is foreign to us and weaker than ourselves; suppression, hardness, the forcing upon others of our own forms, the incorporation of others, or, at the very least and mildest, their exploitation.”¹³

Again, “We believe that man’s Will to Life had to be intensified into unconditional Will to Power; we hold that hardness, violence, slavery, danger in the street and in the heart, secrecy, stoicism, arts of temptation and devilry of all kinds; that everything evil, terrible, tyrannical, wild-beast-like and serpent-like in man contributes to the elevation of the species as much as its opposite,—and in saying this we do not even say enough.”¹⁴

Again, “Those very men who are so strictly kept within bounds by good manners . . . who, in their behaviour to one another, show

¹³ “Beyond Good and Evil,” Fr. Nietzsche, sec. 259.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, sec. 44.

themselves so inventive in consideration, self-control, delicacy, loyalty and friendship,—those very men are to the outside world, to things foreign and to foreign countries, little better than so many uncaged beasts of prey; . . . they become rejoicing monsters, who perhaps go on their way, after a hideous sequence of murder, conflagration, violation, torture, with as much gaiety as if they had merely taken part in some student gambols. . . . Deep in the nature of all these noble races there lurks unmistakably the beast of prey, the blond beast, lustfully roving in search of booty and victory.”¹⁵

These quotations could be indefinitely multiplied. They clearly indicate the writer's philosophy. The whole world exists for the sake of a few “supermen.” That goal can only be reached by regarding all the rest of mankind as tools and instruments. All the old ethical rules are displaced. The “supermen” are entirely beyond good and evil. Here you have the Darwinian dogma of survival carried forward to the human race and applied with all the thoroughness and consistency of a great German thinker.

¹⁵ “A Genealogy of Morals,” Nietzsche, Vol. I, p. 11.

It was no wonder that this man glorified war for its own sake; his philosophy compelled him to do so.

Treitschke asserts the same ideas, though in language a little less blunt. "It makes for health that the nobler race should absorb the inferior stock."¹⁶ "No other course is open to us but to keep the subject race in as uncivilized a condition as possible, thus preventing them from becoming a danger to their handful of conquerors."¹⁷

It was because Pastor Baumgarten was steeped in this anti-Christian set of ideas that he dared to write the words, "Whoever cannot prevail upon himself to approve from the bottom of his heart the sinking of the *Lusitania*—whoever cannot conquer his sense of the gigantic cruelty to unnumbered perfectly innocent victims . . . and give himself up to honest delight at this victorious exploit of German defensive power—him we judge to be no true German."¹⁸

It was because Vierodt's mind had been utterly poisoned with this false philosophy that

¹⁶ "Politics," H. v. Treitschke, Vol. I, p. 121.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁸ "German Speeches in Difficult Days," No. 24, p. 7.

he wrote the lines, "O my Germany, into thy soul thou must etch a deep and indelible hate; this hate thou hast lacked for a long, long time. Retribution, vengeance, fury are demanded; stifle in thy heart all human feeling and hasten to the fight! O Germany, hate! Slaughter thy foes by millions, and of their reeking corpses build a monument that shall reach the clouds. O Germany, hate now! . . . no prisoners! Lock all their lips in silence; turn our neighbours' lands into deserts. O Germany, hate! Salvation will come with thy wrath. Beat in their skulls with rifle-butts and with axes. These bandits are beasts of the chase, they are not men. . . . Strike and thrust, true and hard. Battalions, batteries, squadrons, all to the front! Afterward thou wilt stand erect on the ruins of the world, healed forever of thy ancient madness, of thy love for the alien."¹⁹

These quotations represent the kind of teaching to which the German people were exposed for long years before the war. That teaching found expression in colleges, universities, public schools, the press, the platform, and the political forum. It became part of the

¹⁹ "Out of their own Mouths," p. 116.

mental and emotional furniture of a great part of the German masses.

Is it fair, in the light of these facts, to say that the war is evidence of the breakdown of Christianity? Is it not obvious that the Christian Faith was repudiated to make way for an alien and vicious philosophy? It ill becomes the unbeliever to charge the World War against Christianity. It was the direct product of ideas as anti-Christian as any ideas could be. We might just as fairly charge a physician with failure when the patient has pushed aside the prescribed remedy and drunk deadly poison in its stead. The war proves the collapse of everything adopted as a substitute for the New Testament. Germany was highly efficient in the fields of art, science, commerce and economic experiment, but these did not save her. Over the wreck and ruin of what might have been a glorious empire we think we descry the form of the One who wept over the city that rejected Him in the days of long ago, and today He seems to be saying to this fallen nation, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." The World War stands out be-

fore our vision as the direct product of thoughts, ideas, dreams, ambitions essentially anti-Christian. To-day we dare look an atheistic philosophy in the face, and then, pointing to a wrecked and bleeding Europe say, "This is your work." And if unbelief is honest it will make no reply.

There is only one possible sense in which the contention of unbelief can have meaning. It may be thus stated, "After being in the world for nearly nineteen hundred years, always claiming to be the universal and final religion, Christianity failed to avert the war." Granted. But we contend that it failed because it was not tried. It failed because it was repudiated. Should an Alpine guide give his explicit directions to the climber, and should the latter set them aside and break away from the guide's company, and then fall to his death, would it be fair to say that the guide had failed? Had the guide any right to resort to coercion? No, it is not Christianity that has failed; humanity has failed by setting it aside. The unbeliever's contention really means, "Why did not the Christian Faith compel its own acceptance and adoption?" Because in the spiritual order of things coercion has no place. It would involve

contradiction. We have heard an indignant father say to his wilful son, "I'll make you." And, standing over the child, rod in hand, the parent has compelled obedience! But the obedience which he has coerced has been simply mechanical and formal, devoid of all spiritual meaning and value. The will and affection of the child have not been projected into the formal act of assent. God has never said to His children, "I will make you." A forced virtue is no virtue. Christian Faith calls for the voluntary dedication of life to its ideals and enterprises. Obviously this cannot be secured by coercion. If this simple contention be granted it will be obvious that, as before stated, the war has proved, not the failure of the Christian religion, but the failure of humanity through rejecting it.

The argument from history is set before every truth-seeker with perfect confidence. History is an open book. Facts are the fingers of God. The apologist may wisely step aside leaving truth and the truth-seeker alone. If the seeker has the unbiased mind and the willing heart, the Christian advocate will have no fear of the result.

VII

THE WORLD AT THE CROSSROADS

THE World War has shaken Christian civilization out of some of its false securities and smug satisfactions. As the smoke and dust of the great conflict slowly vanish we can see a few outstanding facts more clearly than before. In more ways than one the world seems to have come to the crossroads. It almost hesitates to move forward, fearing it may make the wrong turn. As a help in reaching wise decisions it may be well to look at a few outstanding truths.

THE WORLD-SITUATION OF TO-DAY CALLS FOR A REVISION OF OUR IDEAS OF PROGRESS

Never has the world moved as rapidly as in the last few years. The material side of our civilization has grown almost by leaps and bounds. In many minds this has created a mistaken sense of progress. The lower forms of growth must be judged by the higher. Only the progress that conforms to the moral

ideal is worthy of the name. We can travel through space much faster than could the fathers of this nation, but, as we step off our express trains, are we quite sure that we are finer men than they were when they stepped out of the stage-coach? We can send messages around the world with the rapidity of the lightning's flash, and comparing our methods with those of the early colonists we can easily pride ourselves upon our material gains. But what is the nature of the messages which we transmit so quickly? Have they more of truth, honour and nobleness than those transmitted by slower processes a few generations ago? The World War was fought in an age when the material forms of civilization far surpassed those of previous ages. This fact only added to the terrors and tortures of the ordeal. Unspiritualized intelligence enabled men to resort to deadly gases, fatal bacteria, liquid fire and other new and frightful methods of destruction. Since the signing of the armistice it has been confidently stated that science has discovered far more deadly forces than any hitherto used, and that in the event of another war whole cities, inhabited by civilians only, could be wiped out of existence in

the course of a few hours. No stronger evidence is needed to show that the lower forms of progress may be an added menace to the world unless subjected to religious control. A lopsided development may be a more serious matter than an arrested development.

Recent history has disposed of an idea that found a place in much of our loose and vain thinking. It is not easy to state this idea since, as a rule, it was not carefully defined. Perhaps it was more of a mood, an attitude, a tacit yet vague assumption rather than a clearly-defined postulate of thought. Put into plain words it might be stated as follows: "Evolution discloses a long history of improvement. Things have moved from lower to higher stages, from crude and simple forms to forms much more delicate and complex. This has been achieved by forces inherent in the nature of things, and therefore progress has been spontaneous and automatic. And the process will continue, of course. Progress is assured by natural and inevitable factors."

Surely the war has disposed of this easy-going view. There is no automatic and inevitable process of development. Tennyson beheld the larger truth when he wrote:

*Evolution, ever climbing after some ideal good,
And reversion ever dragging evolution in the
mud.*

Undoubtedly there has been improvement in the morals and manners of human life, but it has entailed an awful cost. Pain has been part of the price of progress. We have moved upward because there have been those who have been willing to enter Gethsemanes and climb Calvarys for the good of the world.

*Never on custom's oiled grooves
The world to a higher level moves,*

sings Whittier. It is easy to repeat the familiar words, "Truth is mighty and will prevail," but what do the words mean? If they mean that there is some infallible, inexorable law in life by virtue of which falsehood is mechanically destroyed, to be replaced by truth, the proposition may be safely denied. Truth has never prevailed except as lovers of truth have toiled, suffered and died to make it prevail. "Right will overcome wrong." It will, if righteous men are willing to do more, endure more, and suffer more for the sake of right than wicked men are willing to face in the interests of wrong. All this is only an-

other way of demanding that Determinism be displaced from our modern thinking, and that freedom be restored to its place of rightful authority. Unbelief must face this issue. It cannot consistently hold to its position without denying the free will of man, leaving the priceless interests of the race at the mercy of blind, pitiless and impersonal forces which work, as Tennyson has reminded us, "without a conscience or an aim."

An able thinker has said, "Freedom is the essence of our personality. To act freely, not as the plaything of impulses, but according to an idea of law which our own reason has laid down for us, is to be a person, and not a thing."¹

The unbeliever cannot escape the awkward situation in which he stands to-day. He must meet this problem, "How can I deny the validity and reality of religion and yet hold logically to human personality? Am I not compelled to dethrone freedom and bow down before Determinism?" Dare unbelief pay such a price for its aloofness from faith? In any case, the idea that the progress of man-

¹"The Problem of Faith and Freedom," John Oman, D. D., p. 176.

kind is guaranteed by some inherent and automatic forces working toward an inevitable goal has been utterly, and we hope finally, discredited.

Many people do not see the logical consequences in the premises of unbelief, with the result that these premises are lightly assumed. It is well for us to remember that we are dealing with something more than abstract questions. The implications which are inherent in unbelief go to the roots of practical matters. An eminent agnostic writer, Cotter Morison, makes some frank admissions, as quoted by Prebendary Row in the latter's work on "Christian Theism."

"Necessary law reigns in the moral world, and men are under a delusion in imagining themselves free agents.

"Good men and bad men are irresponsible for the goodness and the badness of their actions; the good and the evil which is in them being the necessary result of the conditions of their birth and their surroundings.

"It is impossible for a man by any act of his own to modify his character, which has been formed for him and not by him.

"What we call a bad man is no more respon-

sible for the evil which he does than an engine is for killing a man who trespasses on the rails.

“All efforts to succour the weak and the miserable are an interference with the laws of evolution, which, if not interfered with, would crush them out of existence.

“All attempts to convert the evil man from the evil of his ways are so much lost labour.

“The sooner we get rid of the idea of responsibility the better it will be for society, and moral education.

“The Christian doctrine of forgiveness of sins is pernicious, and destructive of the best interests of society.”²

These and similar conclusions are involved in the premises of unbelief. It may be said in reply that many unbelievers do not hold such views, but that is because they do not think logically. If behind matter and force there be no supreme Personality;—no mind that thinks, no will that determines, no love that redeems, no power that saves, then we are obviously living in a purely material and mechanical universe, and what we call the moral world is dominated only by matter and

² “Christian Theism,” Prebendary Row, pp. 207, 208.

motion. In that case where can we find logical escape from Morison's admissions? Cannot unbelievers see that the terrible consequences which logically follow from the premises of unbelief should be enough to overthrow those premises? The unbeliever cannot carry the system of unbelief in one hand, and the mysteries and dynamics of faith in the other.

THE GREAT HUMANITARIAN MINISTRIES
INITIATED BY RELIGION WILL NOT LONG
SURVIVE THE DESTRUCTION OF RELIGION

Some time ago the writer was driving through a beautiful part of New York State. It was in the month of September. An abundance of fruit was ripening in the orchards. Presently we came to a sight which arrested attention. Evidently a violent wind-storm had swept through a large orchard and had uprooted nearly half the trees. They had all fallen in a northern direction, showing that the wind had come from the south. The fruit was still ripening upon the branches, and the prospects were favourable for an excellent crop of apples even from these fallen trees. There was a certain measure of unexpended vitality in each tree upon which the still un-

ripened fruit might draw. But what were the prospects for next autumn, and the autumns which will follow? Living fruit will not grow upon dead trees. The outstanding ministries of philanthropy have grown out of religious motives and sanctions. The religion of the Cross has inspired redeeming service. Uncounted hosts of noble men and women have sought to show their devotion to their Lord by serving those for whom He died. But if unbelief should ever succeed in destroying faith, these ministries of mercy and love would inevitably perish with the faith that had called them into being. A fly-wheel may continue to revolve for a time after the motive power of the engine is shut off: it does this by the energy of acquired momentum. But the period of such action is brief; soon it comes to a standstill. Religion has been and still is the dynamic of all those higher ministries of service which have helped to heal and hallow the life of the world. Let that driving energy be withdrawn and the results may be foreseen. The missionary will be recalled from the frontiers of civilization, and from the world's darkest places. The slum-worker will vacate the slum, leaving its denizens to their pitiless

surroundings. Organized relief for the stricken and starving sons of men will quietly but surely cease to function. Sacrificial service in the interests of the crippled, the blinded, the maimed and the crushed will become a thing of the past. The holy compassion which, at the promptings of Jesus, has built hospitals, almshouses, orphanages, rescue missions, Florence Crittenden Homes, Dr. Barnardo Homes and countless institutions of kindred temper and purpose, will cease to throb when the Cross is relegated, as certain forms of unbelief seek to relegate it, to the level of an antiquated totem pole. The Christian dynamic ceases when the Christian Faith is destroyed.

In vain will unbelief seek compensation for such disaster from some improved form of State life. The most elaborate dogmas of Socialism when embodied in the State will be unable to furnish spiritual motives inspiring men and women to grapple with broken hearts and shattered lives. The winds will blow from the east, the storms will beat, the tempests will crash, and tragedies will gather about mankind even in the most perfect Socialistic State that any group of thinkers can fashion. Witness Russia to-day. And Socialism, as

such, can furnish no such motives as those which have been inspired by the revelation of God in Christ as a Suffering Redeemer.

Does unbelief feel itself free to contribute to such a debacle of history?

WE HAVE COME TO THE STAGE WHERE
UNBELIEF IS ASSUMING AGGRESSIVE FORMS

It is no longer content with an attitude of quiet dissent. It is not satisfied with a position of aloofness. It is becoming increasingly militant. More and more it is assuming the temper of a crusade. The Russia of to-day is an object lesson of this fact. Religion is under the ban. Teachers of religion have been persecuted and martyred, not because of any criminal involvements, but simply because of their adherence to the Faith. The Russian Christmas Day of this year (January 6, 1923) was officially turned into a day of anti-religious demonstration. The whole degrading performance was staged and executed under State supervision. An effigy, six feet in length, stuffed with straw, with a skull-cap and knee-boots, which represented the Communistic conception of the Deity, was publicly burned amid the laughter and derision of great crowds.

Another scene was a caricature of the miraculous conception of Jesus, with the Virgin Mary as the chief heroine. Every part of the anti-Christian gala day was marked by a spirit of bitter hostility to all the truths and claims of religion.

The Russians have never been known as an exceptionally cruel people. Indeed we have generally credited them with much of simple kindness, patience and generosity. This outbreak of savage fury against religion, especially the Christian religion, cannot be regarded as some racial freak. It is rather an evidence of the new mood of atheism. The restraints of faith have become uncomfortable; the high ideals of faith have become the source of irritation; the Cross has become an offence. More and more unbelief is resorting to a spirit of fierce resentment. What it has done in Russia it may do elsewhere. There are groups and cults in our own country whose pronouncements are sinister, to say the least. The I. W. W. represent a body of men steeped in the spirit of unbelief, and the Communist party is still more openly and avowedly atheistic. No religious restraints will hold them back from dark deeds in our own land should suit-

able opportunities be offered. Here is one of their pronouncements: "How can the proletarian revolution be achieved? By peaceful means? There is only one way to achieve the proletarian revolution, and that is by the mass action of the *armed workers* in open insurrection and civil war against the government,—its army, navy, police, etc."³ Many unbelievers may awake on the morning of some dark day to discover that the restraints of religion cannot be maintained when the truths of religion are discarded. We are living in an era of revolt. Authority is resented. Discipline is unwelcome. Restraints are repudiated. This temper has invaded the realms of art, literature, politics and society. In nearly all directions liberty is being construed in terms of license. This may be but a transient phase through which we are passing; it may be something more serious. Will the enfranchised masses of our modern world choose the path of order, restraint, loyalty to authority, acceptance of discipline, dedication to ideals? Or will they crowd the pathways of license, indulgence and unrestrained self-expression? Is conscience or impulse to rule in individual life?

³ "Proletarian Revolution or Wage Slavery," p. 3.

Is materialism or idealism to control group life? The probability is that many an unbeliever does not clearly see the implications of his position. He does not seem to appreciate the fact that in casting doubt, and even denial upon the truths of religious experience he is helping to destroy the restraints and incentives of faith, with all that that may mean upon the life of the world at this time. Dare he assume this responsibility?

TO-DAY THE WORLD IS CALLING FOR A MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION AMONG ALL SINCERE LOVERS OF TRUTH

As we look out upon the possibilities and the perils of the world of to-day we behold an unseemly wrangle, even a bitter fight between the lovers of truth. Does not this loom up before us as the greatest tragedy of the age? Does not the situation call for a great reconciling ministry between the deepest experience of Faith on the one hand, and the verified results of Science on the other? The bells in the belfry of Science and those in the belfry of Theology have been sending forth jangling and discordant noises long enough. There have been faults on both sides. Undoubtedly the-

ology has unduly emphasized the setting and framework of Divine truth. It has attached as much value to the case as to the jewel. It has often failed to discriminate between the frame and the picture. It has frequently assumed an infallible knowledge of astronomy, geology and biology on the part of the Bible writers, whereas it should have been obvious that such infallibility on their part would have made their writings unintelligible to the world of their day. They had to use such imperfect knowledge as they possessed as the channel for the spiritual ideals and messages with which they have enriched the world. Undoubtedly those of us who dwell in the camp of faith have been too prone to find the presence and power of God in solitary, detached and arbitrary experiences which we have called miracle. In saying this we are not denying miracle. Every alleged miracle must be judged by its evidence. The situation has been stated with great clearness and fairness by Dr. Kelman: "We shall never begin to understand God until we grasp the one obvious certainty that God is forever working, not for the moment, but for the long result. Seeing the end from the beginning, His purpose works to-

ward that far-off goal, and does not swerve from its course. If we understood all, it would be plain to us that this is not only the better, but the only possible way, in which a universe can be managed. Even for our own sakes, one can see how absolutely necessary it is that there should be an order upon which man may count, and by which he may guide his course through life. Were our human history managed upon the principle of perpetually recurring interferences for the sake of this or that one of the countless myriads of men, it would be impossible for any one to accommodate himself to so unstable and irregular a world.”⁴ These words go a considerable way toward a recognition of that principle of universal law upon which science justly lays emphasis. Those of us who are fighting the battles of Faith must recognize the patience, the amazing industry and the sincerity of motive which have marked the labours of those who have sought to interpret the facts and forces of the material universe.

In return we ask that Science shall lay aside all forms of bias against the deepest experi-

⁴ “The Foundations of Faith,” John Kelman, D. D., pp. 170-171.

ences of religion, patiently studying the tremendous part that religion has played in human history. In questioning the claims of infallibility sometimes asserted by Faith it must beware lest it cultivate an infallibility of its own. It can well afford to treat the claims of Faith with a little more courtesy and respect. There will be nothing derogatory to Science if those who are most devoted to its pursuit will but admit when confronted with the beneficent achievements of Faith, "Here is something which Science cannot explain." Mr. Gladstone once declared in the British House of Commons, "Truth is the expression of the Divine mind." That expression is found both in nature and in the deepest experiences of the soul. A common love of truth should do much toward establishing more peaceful relations among truth-seekers. In the mutual admission of their own limitations the Christian theologian and the scientist may find common ground where a fabric of enduring friendship may be built.

AT THIS CRITICAL HOUR THE ONE OUT-
STANDING NEED OF THE WORLD IS A
GREAT QUICKENING OF TRUE
RELIGION

Every age has its own problems and perils, but there seems to be a general consensus of sound opinion that this is an exceptionally critical period. The forces making for world-wide trouble are strong, and in many cases unscrupulous. The world's greatest statesmen are perplexed. The years that have followed the armistice tell their own pitiful story of withered hopes and broken plans. The mischief-maker is abroad. The disintegrating energies of unbridled individualism and rabid nationalism create an atmosphere of world-wide peril. The statesmanship that is constructive in aim and conciliatory in temper finds itself baffled at nearly every turn. Even genius cannot improvise the spirit of good-will, and without that spirit civilization finds itself threatened with something approaching a deadlock. The world could live a relatively happy life for many years to come without any new inventions, devices, or material discoveries, providing its *mood* could be changed. That is

only another way of saying (to use religious terms) that the world's greatest need to-day is a change of heart.

Imagine what would happen if the Gospel of good-will could be enthroned above all the clashing and competing interests of earth and time! Cannot the unbeliever see that if religion fails, everything fails? Everything else *has* failed. Christianity is to-day pleading for a fair trial. Let the sceptre of world-sovereignty be placed in the nail-pierced hand. Let the crown of world lordship and leadership be worn on the brow that was once crowned with thorns. The unbeliever will be guilty of no inconsistency by saying, "After all, the Christian Faith is the highest and best that we know; and whatever my doubts may be I can never disprove its historic basis, while I am compelled to admit its moral values. I will therefore assume its probable truth and trust myself to it, as the sailor trusts his ship to the waves." Such an adventure is of the essence of faith. All who seek the world's highest good should be pulling together. There ought to be a platform sufficiently strong and broad on which the sincere believer and the honest doubter can stand in their loyalty to the clear-

est light. "We needs must love the highest when we see it," and it is because the Christian believer is morally certain that his Faith, with its glowing ideals and its holy achievements, represents the highest, that he ventures to call across the margin that separates him from the unbeliever, "Join with us in our mission to bring this sinning and sorrowing world into obedience to the Highest One, even though your faith in Him be far less robust than ours."

Many unbelievers would be thoroughly alarmed if assured that the Christian Faith was on the verge of complete destruction. These people have no wish to live their lives where the sound of the church bell is never heard, and where the Gospel of Divine mercy is never preached. There are distant lands where such conditions obtain. Think of Thibet. There the sun shines, the winds blow, the showers water the earth, the seasons come and go, but how many of our acquaintances propose to emigrate to such a land? Suppose the sceptic's dream were to be fulfilled. Let the house of worship be turned into a factory and the Sabbath school into a warehouse. Let the story of the Cross be banished and the voice of

prayer forever silenced. Let all spiritual appeals and sanctions be tossed upon the world's rubbish heap. Let all the ties of religion be broken, and its ministries annihilated. This, of course, would be the logical and inevitable issue of the sceptic's position. Our appeal to him is surely obvious: would he care to live in such a world? Not if he accepts the poet's thought, "We needs must love the highest when we see it."

The world is at the Crossroads. Let the unbeliever be careful in which direction he throws the weight of his influence. Humanity cannot continue much longer living in a realm of divided counsels and conflicting leaderships. More and more it will move toward naked materialism or splendid idealism, rank scepticism or shining faith, withering cynicism or world-service. If the world thinks logically, coherently and consistently it must follow Christ or Nietzsche. Facing this grim alternative even the modest doubter cannot be exempted from personal decision. Before that decision is finally made let him remember the underlying thought of these pages: whatever may be the burdens of Faith, the burdens of unbelief are greater. It was a confused, bewildered, baffled

man who cried out, almost in torture, "Lord, to whom shall we go but unto Thee." Man must go *somewhere*. Is it to be Christ or Nietzsche? This is the choice that seems logical, if not inevitable.

The destinies at stake are beyond all human measurement. Ideas and principles must be judged by this tendency. Christian Faith is directed toward God's shining uplands; its goal is a regenerated and glorified humanity. Unbelief cannot share this destiny: its face is inevitably set in an opposite direction. It cannot escape its own fate, which is a return to that cosmic process, "red in tooth and claw," from which even Huxley shrank.

We close this volume with the words with which Dean Church closed his book on "Christianity and Civilization." "In our eagerness for improvement, it concerns us to be on our guard against the temptation of thinking that we can have the fruit or the flower and yet destroy the root; that we may retain the high view of human nature which has grown with the growth of Christian nations, and discard that revelation of Divine love and human destiny of which that view forms a part or a

consequence; that we may retain the moral energy, and yet make light of the faith that produced it. It concerns us to remember, amid the splendours and vastness of a nature, and of a social state, which to *us*, as individuals, are both so transitory, that first and above everything we are moral and religious beings, trusted with will, made for immortality. It concerns us that we do not despise our birth-right, and cast away our heritage of gifts and of powers, which we may lose, but not recover.”⁵

⁵ “Christianity and Civilization,” Dean R. W. Church, p. 143.

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